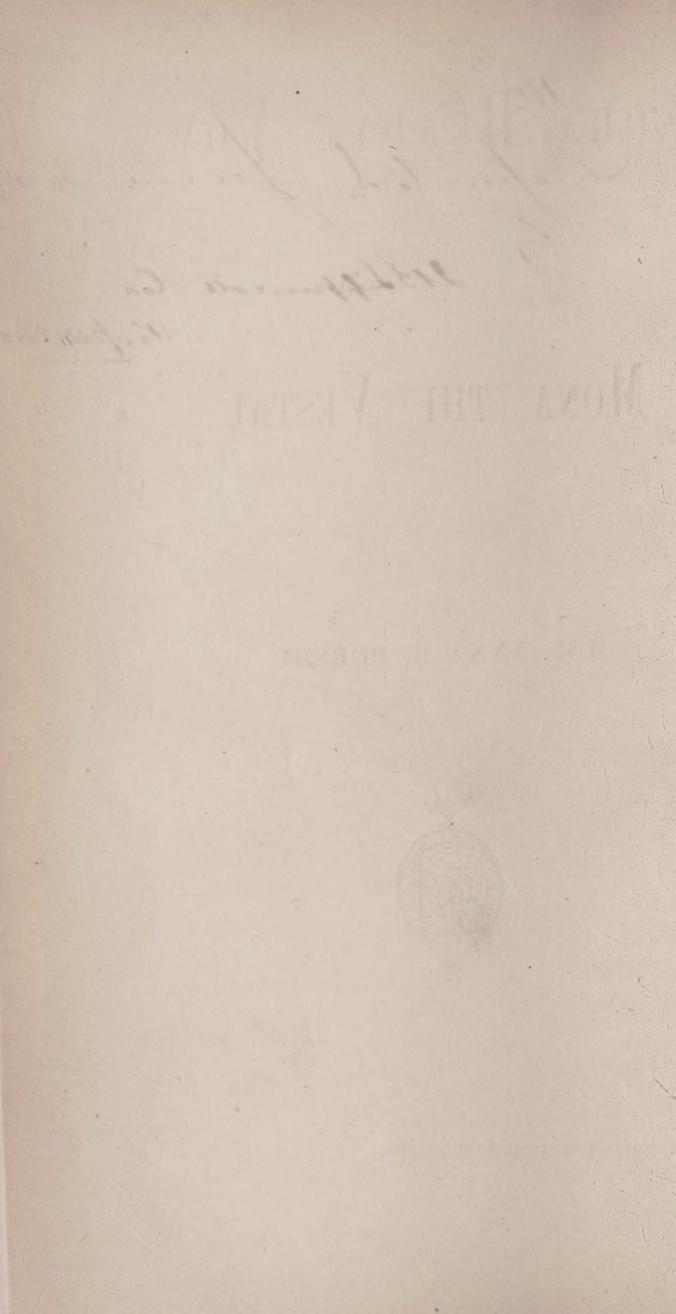




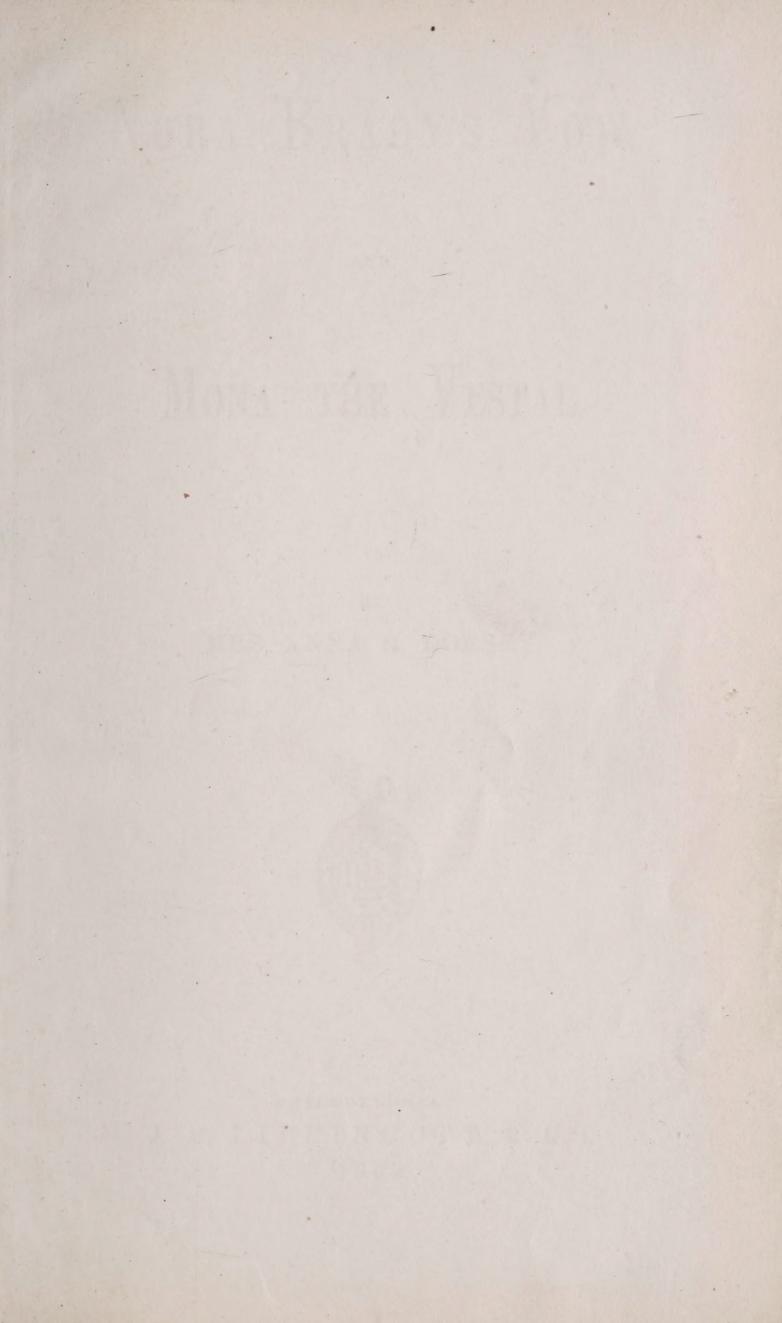
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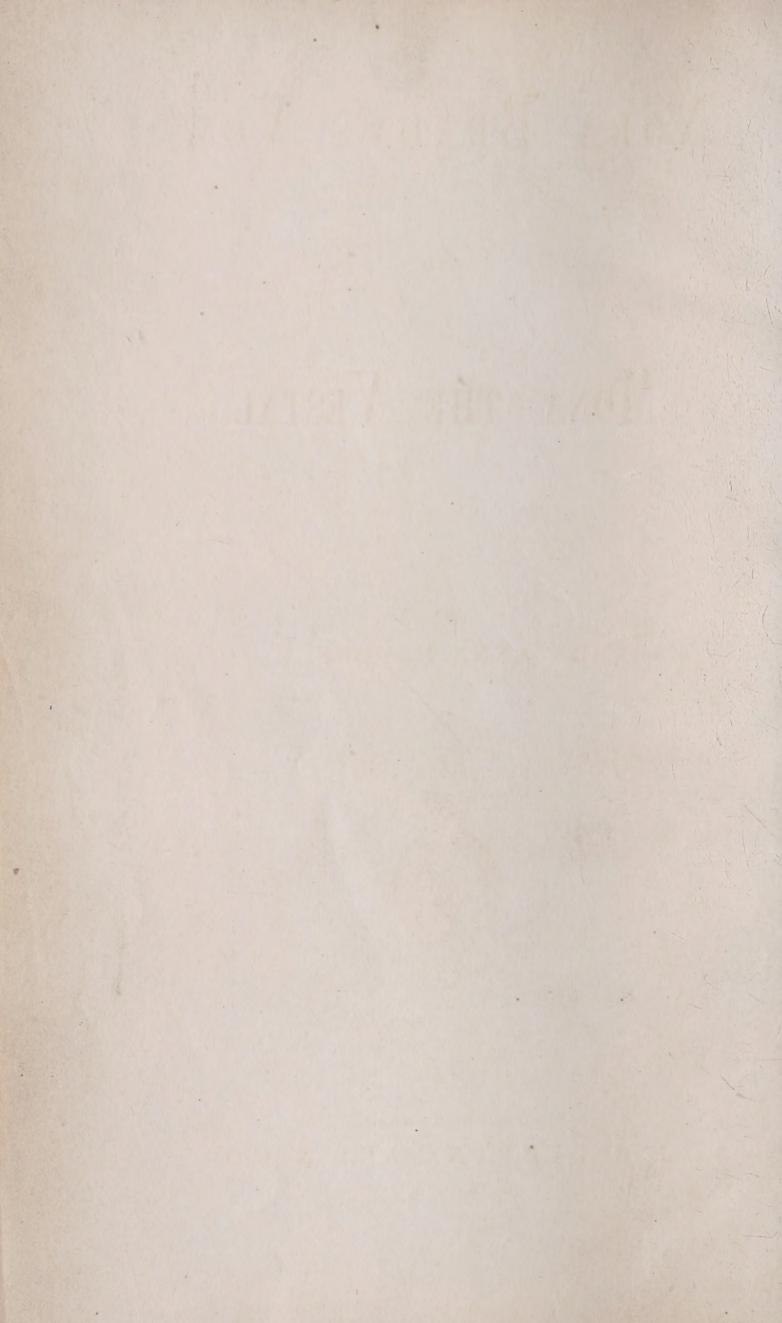
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NORA BRADY'S VOW,

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AND

Mona the Vestal.

BY

MRS. ANNA H. DORSEY.



J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.
1869.

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To the Arish People,

BRAVE AND UNCONQUERED, BEARING LIKE MARTYRS OPPRESSIONS TO WHICH THEY WILL NOT SUBMIT AS SLAVES.

THESE SKETCHES

OF THE

LAND OF THEIR BIRTH AND LOVE, ILLUSTRATIVE OF ITS WRONGS AND GLORIES,

ARE DEDICATED,

WITH THE EARNEST PRAYER THAT ERE THIS GENERATION PASS AWAY,
IT MAY, UNDER THE FOLDS OF ITS OWN

"SUNBURST,"

TAKE ITS PLACE, REGENERATED AND FREE, AMONG THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH.

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE

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PREFACE.

In the story of "Mona" we have adhered strictly to historic accounts in all that we have written descriptive of the religious, intellectual, political, and social status of the ancient Irish. We refer our readers to the Abbé McGeoghegan's "History of Ireland from its Fabulous and Mythological Times, down to the Year 1798," for the correctness of our descriptions.*

Our story opens at that interesting epoch in Irish history when Patricius,† commissioned by Pope Celestine as Ambassador to the Court of Tara, and invested with the order of the Patricii, which was next in honor to the Imperial dignity, landed on the banks of the Boyne, and confronted the Druids and their false creed in the presence of the Estates of Tara; preaching with such courage and unction of "Christ and Him crucified," in the halls of Temora, and on the plains of Magh-Breagh, in the very presence of the idolatries of Baal, that many accepted the Christian faith, and the seed was planted which led to a rapid extinction of a dark and cruel mythology.

Ancient customs, religious and civil, are illustrated in the dramatis personæ of the story: Mona herself being a Vestal of Nerf Naom—the Moon.

At this period Ireland, under the Druidical system,—much of it borrowed from Egypt, from Etruria, and Persia,—was the seat of learning, literature, science, and the arts, and was considered the great school of Western Europe, to which kings and nobles sent their sons to be instructed, by the Druids and Bards, in the rules of learning, jurisprudence, science, and war.

England had been conquered by the Romans, and her people

^{*} Also Mooney's and Carey's Histories of Ireland.

were in fact the slaves of Rome; and while Ireland was basking in the zenith of national prosperity and civilization, they were living in all the ruggedness of untutored nature, dressing in skins, painting their half-naked bodies, living in caves or mud huts, and dependent for subsistence upon the primitive arts of hunting and fishing, and, like other uncivilized peoples, engaged in frequent warfare with each other.

There are many who are ignorant of the fact that Ireland has a history except as a dependency of England: to such we commend the Abbé McGeoghegan's valuable work, that they may learn from it all that Ireland was,—that the sneer may die from their lips when they learn all that she has lost through the treachery of a base king and the cruel and oppressive legislation of a haughty and intolerant government, and wonder, as they read, that freedom has survived, with all its divine instincts, in the hearts of her brave and unconquered sons.

The writer hopes, more from her subject than from any excellence of style, that some popular interest may be awakened by the story of "Mona."

"Nora Brady's Vow" will commend itself, we hope, to the reader by the truthfulness of its delineations, and as illustrative of incidents of the same character, which are not of unfrequent occurrence among us. The devotion and generosity of the Irishwomen who live in our midst, to friends and kindred at home,* have not only excited wonder and admiration on this side of the Atlantic, but were considered of sufficient importance to be made the subject of some statistical remarks in the British Parliament a year or so ago.

Nora Brady is not a fictitious character, although the name is an assumed one; and as we have thrown her virtuous and generous acts together for the sake of vindicating and doing honor to her countrywomen in the United States, we are sure that she will forgive us for "putting her into a book."

^{&#}x27;Ireland, which they always speak of as "home."

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NORA BRADY'S VOW.

CHAPTER I.

"We're men,—as such, should know our rights, and knowing should defend;

Who would be free themselves must dare the tyrant's chain to rend; Ah! fruitless is the grief that springs above a nation's fears,—One firm resolve of mighty men is worth a sea of tears."

Songs of the Nation.

A sunser of unusual beauty, and a few bright tints still lingering on the edges of many a drifting cloud, diffused a peculiar and transparent clearness in the atmosphere, and threw out, on the smooth waters of the Suire, successive images of picturesque scenery. Rocks, trees, and overhanging banks, touched here with light and softened there with shadow, with traceries of tangled shrubbery running through it all, were pictured forth with rare and beautiful fidelity; but beyond these fell a sterner gloom, and more solemn shadows, which seemed to chill the very waves in whose calm depths they slumbered like wild and sorrowful dreams in some living human heart. was a ruin on that shore, a ruin of old, whose gray walls, majestic tower, and mildewed arches had for centuries past stood like a hoary prophet beside those waves, to remind the living of their faded glories, and incite them to a future which should repair the sorrows and losses of the past. And now, as the soft twilight slowly gathered

around the old Abbey of Holy-Cross-by-the-Suire, it only required a vivid imagination to people that quiet solitude with its by-gone inmates. The swift flitting of bats through its pillared arcades, the sad cry of the bittern brooding in the rank grass below, and the faint rustling of the ivy clinging to the ruined walls, when blended with the long-ago memories and legends haunting the spot, made a language expressive enough for any lover of the ideal to work his spells with, and drape cloisters and shrines with their ancient splendors, and crowd those broad aisles once more with saint-like processions or prostrate forms. Erected by the piety and munificence of Donald O'Brien, King of Limerick, in the year 1169, the magnificence of its architecture made it a fane worthy of the sacred shrine which inclosed a relic of the TRUE Cross incased in a reliquary of gold and jewels of inestimable value, and presented by Pope Paschal II. to McMorrogh the predecessor of Donald. Its magnificent altars, dedicated to the Holy Cross, to St. Mary, and St. Benedict, were famed throughout the land, not only for the splendor which surrounded them, but for the multitude and devotion of the worshipers and pilgrims who continually thronged thither; while the austerity and holiness of the monks who, holding the Cistercian rule, filled its cloisters, rendered it one of the most celebrated and sacred monastic establishments in Ireland. But, like incense exhaled from precious flowers, those souls which through succeeding centuries glorified God in their works of holiness and purity, were now fled; the feet of the spoiler had trampled over the place, and unholy hands had desecrated and ruined the shrines; the earth, rich in the dust of bodies which had consecrated themselves to God, was torn up and scattered, in search of perishable treasures; the magnificence of architecture, the costliness and charm

of rare sculptured marbles, the rich and gorgeous stained glass of the windows, were all defaced—broken—ruined. And there it stands at this late day, to tell its own tale of woe, appealing to the Lord of Hosts for justice and vengeance on an iniquitous and oppressive system which for centuries has tortured His Spouse the Church with fetters and disfigured her robes with the rust and tears of oppression.

The moon now risen poured down a flood of light into the broad nave, slanting her silver beams on the long rows of pillars, leaving the aisles in darkness and shadow. The altar of the Holy Cross stood out conspicuous and beautiful in the unclouded radiance. One might almost have imagined that the careful old monks had thrown a cloth of gold over it, to protect from dampness and dust its treasures; but no, it was only the cold, bright moonlight, the faithful witness and tender consoler of its silent woes, which still sought to brighten its deep desolation and throw a beauty around its decay. At a little distance were the broken altars of the Virgin Mother and St. Benedict, near which stood the royal tomb of the O'Brien, with its canopy of marble supported by twisted pillars. Here and there the moonbeams lit them up, gleaming on a rare tracery, or silvering over some sculptured arch, touching here a broken shaft, there the defaced image of saint or cherub, or rippling down over the moss-grown graves like the footprints of the angels who watch the dust of those who sleep in the Lord.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a slow footstep, and a man, old and gray, entered the ruin. Arrested by the exquisite and mournful beauty of the scene, he stood a moment, leaning on his staff, to survey it; then, reverently uncovering his head, he knelt, and, folding his hands over his bosom in the form of a cross, appeared to pray de-

voutly. We cannot say for what or whom he prayed It may have been for the repose of those who slept in peace around him; it may have been for some living tempted soul; or it may have been for his country, for troublous times again threatened it, and well he knew, that aged priest, that one, nor two, nor thousands of victims could close or fill the awful gulf which unsuccessful outbreaks always opened.

Ere long the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard on the bridge which spanned the Suire, and soon issuing from the shadow and galloping along the shore, the horseman urged his steed up toward the ruins, where suddenly halting, he lifted his cap from his head, and, wiping the moisture from his brow, he threw back the thick clustering locks that fell over it.

"Old Holy Cross!" he murmured, "your gray ruins have not been vain teachers, and once more must I visit that tomb and shrine which first awoke my fairest dreams for the regeneration and freedom of this dear land.—It may be the last time I shall ever look on ye, old relics of the days that are gone; but if I fall in this struggle, let me hope, O Heaven! that the blood which shall be poured out like water, in defense of man's holiest rights, may nurture into full strength and maturity the roots of that glorious tree whose leaves shall sweeten the bitter waters of the woes of my country." There was a tone of deep feeling in his voice, and an earnest enthusiasm in every gesture, as he turned in under the arches of the old abbey, which indicated in his nature the elements of heroic courage, and a spirit which would glory in martyrdom.

When he saw the kneeling figure of the priest, he started, then drew back in the shadow of a pillar, where he stood like some gray statue, gazing thoughtfully on the scene. But presently the aged man finished his

prayer; he made the sign of the cross on his breast, and, bowing his head reverently for an instant, in honor of the Majesty who once dwelt there, he turned to leave the abbey, when the other stepped forward, and, laying his hand with affectionate freedom on his shoulder, said,—

"Father McCarthy, I did not expect to find you here!"
"John Halloran!" said the priest, starting. "I am glad
to meet you. I have had you in mind this live-long day,
and have just come down from Glendariff, where I went
to seek you. Ease my heart at once by saying that you
have abandoned the wild and ruinous scheme—the hopeless plan that we have spoken of before."

"Father, I am sorry we have met, if the old dispute is to begin,—the old and useless dispute. Shame on the clergy of Ireland, who oppose this daring effort for the freedom of their flocks and their altars, and lend their influence and hand to the oppressor!" exclaimed the young man, angrily.

"Thou, God, knowest how baseless is the charge," said the priest, baring his gray locks, and lifting his hands and eyes toward heaven, as if appealing against such unmerited injustice. "Thou knowest how we have stood for long, sorrowful years between the porch and the altar, bowed down with the woes of the land, and leading the people through the wilderness toward the place of promise. But the people sin by disobedience and revolt; they wait not for the harvest, but pluck the unripe fruits and suffer; they wait not God's time and God's holy will, and long bitter years are added to their exile. John Halloran, I am old—more than seventy years have rolled over my head. I have in that time seen much of men, and I have watched, like an eagle from his eyrie, for the daydawn; but I tell you I see it not yet. These revolts—

these volcanic eruptions of a few burning hearts, which at best only leave their ashes to their country—these uncertain, irresponsive insurrections, which never assume the dignity of revolutions, only rivet the chains more firmly, and put off the day of deliverance into the dim and distant future."

"Now, father, what is the use—what is the use of all this? Age and misfortune have cooled your blood and patriotism together, and, near the grave, you have but small care for a future which will roll over your ashes. Oh, my father!" exclaimed John Halloran, with deep pathos, "does not the scene around soften your heart?

"Of these ruins I will not speak; but of yonder wretched cabins, thrown together from their fragments, and which scarcely afford a miserable shelter for the human beings who occupy them, of the want and desolation which surround them, I must and will speak. Their wretched inmates, possessed of the dignity of immortal souls, are reduced by the system which oppresses them to a level with the beasts. Where is their activity—where their energy? Crushed out of their lives by a knowledge of the utter inadequacy of their labor, and the hopelessness of their condition.

"They have lost almost the noble image of man. Their gaunt, athletic frames are meager and fleshless—their color livid—their features sharpened—while their countenances express the habitual influence of strong, deep passions. Where is the quick intelligence, which only flashes out now and then mingled with the lurking slyness of distrust? Where are the thrift, the industry, the plenty, which should be theirs? Ask the tithe-gatherers, the tax-collectors, the drivers, who, like locusts, devour their substance. The very children are want-stricken and badly clad, while the loveliness of their age is disfigured

by squalid poverty and the drapery of extreme want; they are idle and joyless, and loiter about the cabin-door without an aim, while the father, perchance, has gone to seek employment in the English harvest-fields where his hire is paid with a smile of derision, and he is expected to excite laughter by his blunders, who might well command tears by his wretchedness * And these are your children -these are the miserable ones to whom you would have us deny succor! Is it only in this poor hamlet that such things are seen blotting the face of nature? No, oh my God! over all the land the same dismal spectacle is seen: from every cabin is heard the wail of anguish, and wherever thrift and plenty smile, it is for those foreign leeches who add to our burdens and have no right to a foothold on our soil. And can we rest? Must we rest? Shall we desist? No, rather let us perish!" exclaimed the almost frantic man.

"John Halloran," said the aged priest, whose bowed form trembled with an emotion he could scarcely control, "think you that these things move you and leave me unscathed? I declare solemnly before Heaven that, had I a thousand lives, I would lay each life down to be trampled out by separate and distinct tortures, if by the sacrifice this dear land of my birth could be delivered. But I am a powerless old man, who can only pray and plead; and it wrings my very soul to see energies thrown away—worse than wasted—which, at the right time, might work wondrous changes; to know how men whom I honor for their worth and unselfishness will fall in the unequal strife without even the honor of a soldier's grave; and how others, the noble descendants of the McCarthy More, the O'Brien, the O'Donoghue, and the O'Neill, will

^{*} Lady Morgan.

be hunted like felons to suffer a felon's doom. I know ye all, John Halloran. Some are my own kinsmen, some of my flock, and yet, woe's me, I can neither stay their madness nor arrest their folly——"

"Father!" said the young man, suddenly interrupting him, while a bright smile burst over his countenance, "ere ten days are over, you will sing Te Deum in your mountain chapel for the deliverance of Ireland. The moment the first blow is struck, the whole country will fly to arms, and our oppressors, unprepared for the overpowering crisis, will be scattered like chaff on the whirlwind. Brian Boroihme and Malachi the brave will be our rallying-words, and, after a few decisive struggles, our land will be all our own. We shall have once more our own laws, our own parliament, our own rulers. The old names will be honored in the land. The Church will lift her head free and rejoicing; and the great possessions, wrested from the old princely sons of the soil by the virgin Queen Elizabeth, by the Jameses, and by that devil's own psalm-singer, Cromwell, will be restored to their descendants____'

"Halloran," interrupted Father McCarthy, "your dream is the one which has haunted me for years; but, alas! it is only the gleam of a meteor, the splendor of a rainbow, which fades while we gaze on it. Would to God your sanguine hopes were based on surer foundations! but, alas! boy, the means of the foes against which you contend are almost omniscient. While you plot, they counter-plot; while you scheme, they undermine; and already, by the aid of base informers, the chief leaders of this rebellion* are marked, and predestined to ignominy and death. It will only be the re-enactment

^{*} Rebellion of '48.

of the tragedy of '98. But I will say no more, except this; and listen well, John Halloran, for I am going to knock roughly against the doors of your heart; and if this consideration which I offer fails, then God help you; I will say no more. Up yonder, at Glendariff, is a meek and loving woman, whose cheeks have become worn and thin with watching, and with the anxieties to which the continual perils of her husband give birth. She sits now beside two weeping children, who divide her love and hopes with their absent father. A few months ago, Glendariff was the abode of happiness and peace; now it is the retreat of fear and sorrow. Who is this mother? who this wife? She belongs to one of the old princely septs of the land. She was the sunshine and flower of her old feudal home, and her hand was destined for a rich and powerful nobleman, her equal in birth. A splendid future was before Mary O'More. But she spurned it all,-rank, riches, and splendor,-to wed with one whose worth alone was his nobility, and whose riches consisted of the old farm-house and the few acres where his forefathers had toiled generations before him. John Halloran, you know whom I mean! Have you a right to drag down that high-born, gentle woman into poverty, and, at the best, exile,—to impoverish the children she has borne you, and fix the name of felon's brood on them?"

"Even that I do dare," said John Halloran, in a calm, stern voice; "that—all—everything for the sacred cause of my country. I am one of the people. I glory in having sprung from them, and I, John Halloran, will deliver them, or die. Life—soul—wife—children—and home!" he exclaimed, striking the ruined altar by which he stood with his clinched fist. "Let me only strike a blow for Ireland, let me be remembered among her deliverers, and I would not barter the title it will give me for an

imperial diadem, or the most ancient birthright that the archives of time could bestow. My poor Mary! My sweet, saint-like wife! That was a tender chord for you to crash down so rudely on, my father. May the Blessed Mother of God succor and defend her and her babes," he said, in a low, trembling voice. "But I must hasten home. You mean well, my father, but you are behind the times. One grasp of the hand, and your blessing, ere I go." And he threw himself with a simple abandon at the feet of Father McCarthy, adown whose furrowed cheeks warm tears were fast falling.

"My child," he said, in a broken voice, while he laid his hand on the head of the kneeling man, "perchance we shall never meet again on earth. Our meeting tonight is not one of chance. You are engaged in a perilous enterprise, and, to my certain knowledge, will pass a terrible crisis in a few days. Let not, then, this hour go by unimproved, but, at the sacred tribunal of penance, make peace between your soul and God. Here, beneath the solemn heavens, above the dust of the holy dead, give me power, by performing sacramental penance with an humble and contrite heart, to absolve you from the guilt of sin, if perchance your conscience is burdened and sore."

The appeal was not in vain. It was enough. Like a child, simple yet strong in his faith, the noble but mistaken man, kneeling by the side of the venerable priest of God, who sat on a broken tomb, poured out in whispered words the sincere and earnest confession of his soul. Thus alone in that old ruin, watched over and guarded by unseen angels, we leave them, and wend our way to Glendariff, the home of John Halloran.

CHAPTER II.

Oh, the moment was sad when my love and I parted:
Savourneen Deelish, Eileen Ogge;
As I kissed off her tears, I was nigh broken-hearted:
Savourneen Deelish, Eileen Ogge:
Wan was her cheek, which hung on my shoulder;
Damp was her hand: no marble was colder;
I felt in my heart I should ne er more behold her:
Savourneen Deelish, Eileen Ogge.

MARY HALLORAN, whose mind had been unusually disturbed that day by vague apprehensions, grew more and more uneasy as the hours wore on, and wandered out to station herself on the side of what, at Glendariff, was called the "Sunset Hill," to watch for the return of her husband. But the brightness faded from the sky, twilight deepened into gloom, and soon the chilly night and the pale moonlight, which threw grotesque, weird-looking shadows around her, warned her in. cannot rest," she murmured, with a deep sigh: "this veiled sorrow pursues me everywhere. Oh, why does not John come? While he is near me, the dread and terror stand aloof; when he is absent, they haunt and scourge me." She lingered a few moments at the door, listening intently for the well-known sound of his horse's hoofs on the gravel. But all was silent; and, turning away with a shudder, she entered the house, and, with slow, heavy steps, went up into the children's room to seek some solace in their smiles and caresses. But the little ones were asleep in their cribs, and, leaning over,

her tears fell heavy and fast on the golden curls and fair cheeks of Gracie; but when she gazed down on the fine manly face of her boy Desmond, over whose crimson cheeks dark locks of curling hair had strayed, and saw the haughty brow and firm, well-set lips, her tears ceased, and, folding her hands together, she whispered, "God help thee, boy! thy battles will be strong and bitter with life; they may break, but never bend thee." Then she felt, as she watched the holy calm that overspread their features, and knew how dark and stormy was all before them, a wish, half defined,—almost a prayer,—that each little soul, ere day-dawn, could be housed in heaven. She kissed them softly, and, bidding Ellen shade the light from their eyes, went down into the drawing-room, that she might hear the first sound of her husband's footfall when he entered. There was a large oriel window opening down to the lawn, -the only modern addition John Halloran had made to his house when he came of age,-from whence she had always been accustomed, since their marriage, to watch his approach up the road leading to Glendariff. She drew back the heavy curtains, and looked out long and anxiously; but all was lonely and silent, the very shrubs, on which the moonbeams had woven a tissue of silver, being motionless. The heavy drapery fell from the grasp of her slender fingers, and, with an aching heart, she went away, and threw herself with an exhausted air into a low cushioned chair near the fire.

A door opened noiselessly, and a light footstep entered. Mrs. Halloran turned her head quickly, hoping it might be her husband.

[&]quot;Oh, is it you, Nora?" she said.

[&]quot;Yes, ma'am; I came in to see if you would have lights."

"Oh, Nora, I am so uneasy about Mr. Halloran. No—no—no; do not bring in the lights yet," she said, in an agitated tone.

"It's a cup of tea would set you up, ma'am; let me fetch in the tray."

"No, dear; not until Mr. Halloran comes," she replied. Nora stood a moment looking at the fragile form and pale countenance of Mrs. Halloran, which seemed whiter and more sunken in the fitful fire-light, surrounded as it was by the dark-crimson cushions against which she leaned, and an expression of bitter sorrow flitted over the girl's handsome face, while a tear stole silently down from the black fringes of her eyes, and fell unheeded. Then she closed the door very softly, and went back to the kitchen, muttering, "It's no use to deny it, but it's an evil heart would put the mildew and tear on such a delicate flower as that, sure. So much for puttin' new wine in ould bottles. Let everybody mate with their equals, high as well as low." Then she gathered up her work and took her seat beside the cheerful fire, with an attempt to look cheerful and unconcerned, and a few efforts to sing blithely, which were sadder than the bitterest tears would have been. The door of the spacious, cheerful kitchen, where Nora reigned supreme, was thrown open, and a broad stream of light flowed out on the sward and shrubbery, setting them all aglow, as if a red sunset were gleaming over Glendariff. The brick floor was sanded in fantastic patterns, and the dressers literally glittered with the well-scoured pewter and copper utensils that covered them. Here and there hung a colored print, neatly framed in carved bog-wood, of the "Annunciation," "St. Agnes," and "St. John the Evangelist," over which were arranged tastefully sprigs of holly and fern. On a little shelf, apart, reposed a handsome prayer-book, and a rosary of coral and silver, her last year's Christmasgift from Mrs. Halloran, and of which she was specially proud.

Nora was a fine specimen of her class. Above the middle height, handsome and well formed, everything about her expressed an innate pride of character and a high degree of self-respect. She had been the plaything and playmate of Mrs. Halloran when they were both children at Fada-Brae Abbey; and, as Mary O'More would never study unless Nora Brady had lessons also, Mrs. O'More, to secure her daughter's attention, and also to benefit the girl, of whom she was fond, directed the governess to indulge her daughter's affectionate whim, until she was sent to France to finish her education. Thus commenced the affection between the nobly-born Mary O'More and Nora Brady. Widely separated by rank, yet loving and grateful, they continued to serve each other in their respective spheres until a mutual dependence was established, which developed many a noble and beautiful trait in each.

Nora's service was light enough, and one which she preferred to any other situation at Glendariff, as in it she enjoyed all the benefits of an active life and could contribute very essentially to the comfort of those she served. Nora's kitchen was her parlor, reception, and sitting-room, and its neatness was a marvel to all who were privileged to enter it; for let it not be supposed that the drudgery and cooking for the people employed at Glendariff were performed here. There was another building, apart from the mansion, where all this was done, and where substantial comfort prevailed; for it was one of the cares of John Halloran's life to attend to the well-being of every living thing connected with him, and he was rewarded by increased prosperity and a cheerful service which

was becoming rare and uncertain in the down-trodden country.

Nora's song gradually ceased, and a deep, thoughtful expression settled on her countenance. Occasionally she went to the door and looked anxiously down the path, but returned each time with a disappointed look to her chair. The red in her cheeks grew deeper, and something like a frown gathered on the smooth, white forehead of Nora, as, giving her head a toss, she broke out with,—

"It would be a good thing altogether, I believe, if there wasn't a man to be found; for wherever one is there is trouble, surely. There's the mistress, now, with her beautiful face growing more like a wraith every day, by rayson of the great oneasiness that's on her in respect to the meanderings of Mister Halloran, and no one to the fore but that Donald Dhu to comfort her, that, in place of easing her poor heart, fills it with the afflictions of Job hisself, that's got a leer in the bad eyes of him, enough to pizen a witch. Then, on the back of that, as if it wasn't enough to put a decent girl demented, here comes that ommadawn from Kildare, laving his forge, and the hoofs that wouldn't be amiss if they give him a kick or two, to persuade me, by troth, to marry him, and butthering me up about his new lease and the fine cow. But I won't -if he's got a lease for five hundred years on the ould place, and ten cows, and ten horses, and twenty sheep forenent it. I'll let the born villain into a saicret, before long, that'll make him hop like a lame duck. But whist! It's an ould saying, if them's his feet I hear on the gravel, that talk of the devil (Lord save us!) and he's surely at hand."

"A good-even to you, Nora. I've been watching you all the way up from the gate, an' faith it did my heart good to see you looking so happy like, an' the red light

shining about you asthore, as it will some better day in glory," said a weary-sounding voice at the door.

"Come in, Dennis Byrne, and don't stand there jabbering at the door-sill to disturb Mrs. Halloran," she replied, without looking up, although she was half tempted to do so, and was ready to burst into tears; for there was something so unusually sad in Dennis Byrne's voice, that she felt at once that something had happened.

"It's a poor welcome you give me, Nora, after a heavy day's work, an' a sore tramp from Kildare," he said, still leaning against the door.

"Come in and rest yourself. No one hinders you," was her ungracious reply.

"You saw the sogers go past to-day?" he said, taking a chair near her.

"It's like enough I'd leave my ironing and plaiting to run down to the road to stare at sogers! I can't afford to lose the time that some does," she replied, with a toss of her head.

"S'pose then, bedad, they come thundering up here to Glendariff and ordered you at the point of their bayonets to sew a button on every man's coat of 'em?"

"And if they did," she replied, while her eyes flashed,
—"if they did, I wouldn't. I'd try to make some of 'em
wish they'd never h'ard such a thing as a button was
invented. But what do you mean, man alive? You look
as if you had been dead and buried."

"Oh, nothing very particular, only I've been shoeing horses since ten o'clock this morning, with a cocked pistol aimed at my head, and all I got for my pains was curses and hard knocks. An' I'll tell you, Nora bhan asthore, I h'ard some things said about Glendariff an' Mister Halloran that it would be well enough to make him acquainted with."

"It's mighty strange, Dennis, they should talk out before you?" said Nora, fixing her black eyes with an anxious expression on his.

"Faith, then, it's not so mighty strange, seein' I never let a word of English out of my jaws, but nonplushed 'em with a little Kerry lingo, that set 'em half wild," he said, while a flash of merriment danced over his face.

"Now tell me, Dennis dear, what it all means," said Nora, laying her hand on his shoulder, while tears gathered in her eyes.

"Whist, Nora, ma colleen," he whispered; "there's a rebellion afoot, an' Mister Halloran's one of the chiefs of it. And they're going to station sogers at Glendariff, and set spies on him, and take him up to Dublin if they catch him."

"And what if he's taken?" gasped Nora.

"He'll be hung or transported."

"Oh, Jesus!" exclaimed Nora, with a cry of bitter anguish.

"Hist, Nora asthore! hist! I hear footsteps on the gravel."

"The Holy Virgin grant it may be Mister Halloran!" said Nora. "I expect they'll want lights now, and I'll step in with the candelabra." The massive silver candelabrum, supporting wax candles, stood in a closet all ready. She hastily took it out, and, lighting the trimmed and oiled wicks, went into the drawing-room with it. She soon returned, and, resuming her seat, while a crimson flush dyed her cheeks, she said, "No, it's not Mister Halloran: it's that bad, black Donald, that I'll put some throuble on yet, if he don't keep his dirty hands to hisself."

"What's that you're saying, Nora?" asked Dennis Byrne.

"Nothing—nothing. Mind your own business, Dennis, man. I said Mister Halloran has not come yet," she replied, bustling over her work-basket.

So it was. Mrs. Halloran had heard the footsteps, and sprang toward the door to meet her husband, but, when she saw her dark kinsman, always an unwelcome guest, she drew back with a loud cry of disappointment. He held out his hand, and said,—

- "I hope, my lady cousin, I am not intruding."
- "No, no," she said, hurriedly; "I only thought it was John—"
- "Halloran out, eh? I came up to see him on business. Do you expect him in soon?" he said, with a dark and sinister look.
- "Every moment. I hope to see him come in every instant," she replied, hurriedly.
- "Yes, I hope so too. The country is in a very troubled state, and I believe government is on the alert to arrest every one whose conduct is at all suspicious. John is the leading man in his district; and the law expects him, of course, to keep order among his tenants."
- "Of course—yes, of course. John has always endeavored to keep order among our people. He has made them his friends, Cousin Donald, by promoting in every way their interests and comfort and morals. I don't think we shall have trouble with our people," she said, anxiously.
- "I hope not. John's Quaker blood ought to preach and plead for peace. By-the-by, Cousin Mary, you know I was in France when you got married, and I'm not well acquainted with Halloran's antecedents. What is the family history? There ought to be some legends connected with an old place like Glendariff."
 - "There are none," she said, quietly. "John's family,

as far back as we can trace them, have been Quakers and the proprietors of Glendariff. He, you know, is the last of his name, and the inheritor of their wealth."

"But Halloran is a Catholic: that is strange."

"Yes, thank God, John is a good and sincere Catholic. He became one a few years before our marriage, at Rome."

"Hum-ahem-and you met him-?"

"In Dublin. We frequented the same circles"

"But—pardon me, my lady cousin, for interrupting you again—a rumor came to me over the water that the beautiful Mary O'More, the last of the lineal descendants of the McCarthy More, was about mating with the Earl of Rathlinn, the wealthiest of our Irish peers."

"Mary O'More had enough of the pride of the princes of Munster left in her not to mate with a man who, if famous for his riches and power, was still more notorious for his vices. She preferred the noble and unsullied heart she has chosen, who, if he has no rank to boast of, can show an ancestry without stain or reproach, whose virtues he inherits and whose fair name he honors," exclaimed Mrs. Halloran, rousing herself, and speaking proudly.

"Yes," drawled Donald, well named the Black, with an insufferably supercilious air; "yes, I heard he was a clever person. It would be a pity, though——"

"What would be a pity?" she inquired, haughtily.

"It would be a *great* pity if Halloran should get mixed up in these secret organizations which are on foot. It would be a pity for this fine old property to be involved."

"John Halloran is one who scorns all anticipated pity, being sufficient in his own resources for whatever may befall him. But why should Donald More suggest such things?" she said, with dignity.

"Well," he said, "the times suggest them-not I.

Every man ought to be on his guard who has landed interests at stake, and children to inherit them."

Just then a quick step bounded through the hall, and the next moment Mary Halloran lay sobbing on the bosom of her husband.

"Ha, More! I'm glad to see you," he said, supporting his wife in one arm, while he held his hand out to her kinsman. "Mary, darling, you have moped yourself to death, and are nervous. By-and-by we shall be more together; my business is almost completed. But apropos, where is supper? Nora! Nora Brady, let us have tea and a cold fowl, and any other nice thing you may have," said Mr. Halloran, calling to Nora in cheerful tones.

"I wonder you are not more careful, Halloran," said Donald More, as John Halloran threw himself on the sofa beside his wife; "outrages are fearfully common—burnings and murders by the score."

"It's the old song, and a convenient and most plausible excuse for new exactions—new oppressions," he replied, carelessly. "I know something about these matters. I know how, insulted and trodden on, exasperated and maddened, my poor countrymen sometimes turn like worms and sting the heels that crush them. Then come the outcry and the death-cry together, and the huge hand of oppression, armed with a thousand scourges, falls heavily far and wide. No, I am not afraid; and once it would have been a marvel to hear one of the McCarthy Mores talk of fear."

"That's very fine—a very fine sentiment; but I suppose the Mores are degenerating with the rest of mankind; besides, you know, I am a lateral branch, and my mother was an Englishwoman, so I'm sworn in from my birth, and all my natural proclivities are for the Union," said Donald More, laughing sarcastically.

Sitting a little back from the others, he had been watching Nora as she came in and out, making eyes at her, and grimacing, which liberties she resented by looks of ineffable scorn on her handsome face; and, finally, as she attempted to reach across to put the tea-urn in its place, he suddenly pinched her cheek.

"Ugh!" screamed Nora, and the next instant the teaurn, with its boiling contents, was toppled over him. He sprang up with a fearful oath. Mrs. Halloran shrieked, and her husband, who, in a mirror opposite, had watched the whole affair, could scarcely control his features or restrain his laughter.

"Nora—why, Nora," he said, as she came in with a cloth to wipe up the floor, "that was extremely awkward."

"I know it was, sir; an' if a vile bug hadn't stung me on the cheek, it wouldn't have happened at all. I wish St. Patrick himself was here to drive all such venomous creatures away from Glendariff, anyways. Did it hurt you, sir?" she asked, innocently, turning to Donald More, who, half frantic with pain, had thrown himself on the sofa, where he lay groaning vociferously. His reply was full of profanity and fury. Nora shrugged her shoulders, and turned away to conceal the smile that flitted over her face.

"Go, Nora, quickly, and tell Mrs. Shea to prepare the south chamber for Mr. More; tell her he is badly scalded. Go, have it done as soon as possible," said Mrs. Halloran, nervously.

"I am sorry this accident happened, Donald," said John Halloran.

"Accident! I am parboiled. My shoulder—my arm—my thigh! Good God, Halloran! I am almost murdered!" he screamed.

"You will feel better soon. Keep quiet. Mrs. Shea has an invaluable remedy for burns—"

"Do try, John, to get him up to the south room at once, that something may be done," said Mrs. Halloran, really sorry for him.

"Yes-yes-let me get there. I shall go mad if this continues five minutes longer. Help me up, Halloran. There—Diable! I can't walk." But, with the assistance of a stick, and Mr. Halloran's arm, he succeeded in climbing the stairs, where, in a little while, a remedy was applied, which relieved his pains considerably, and a composing draught administered, under the influence of which his irritated nerves were somewhat soothed. Mrs. Shea, sharing in the dislike with which all regarded him, darkened the room, and made her escape as soon as she thought he was asleep. But he heard her go out, and, finding himself alone, gave vent to the revengeful feelings of his dark heart in low, bitter words. "It shall fall on them all," he said, -"all. I have not dogged John Halloran's steps, day and night, in vain. He robbed me of my first love-the love of my boyhood. She robbed me of the small inheritance, which should be mine, by her inconstancy; and now this vixen—this virago—because I touched her dainty cheek, maims me for life. But vengeance is near at hand." And he fell asleep, to dream of the ruin he would work.

It was past midnight, and a deep hush was over Glendariff. All beneath the old roof slept soundly, except John Halloran. He sat watching beside a lone couch, on which reclined his wife. She had refused to retire. A strange, sad presentiment urged her to watch through that night, lest, if she fell asleep, when she awoke she should find him gone; but at last he prevailed on her to lie down and rest, and, folding her hand in his, sat talking low,

pleasant words to her, until, quite exhausted with the emotions of the day, a deep slumber stole over her. And now she lay so calm and motionless that it looked like death,-strangely beautiful and solemn. He dashed heavy tears from his eyes as he leaned over her, and his heart almost failed him. He thought, perchance, he might never look on her face again. Alas! long years would roll by ere he would see that sweet face again, except in visions of the night. A pang wrung his heart, and his face grew deadly white. He stooped and kissed her, then took up the small scissors from the work-table and cut one of the long fair curls which lay on her cheek, and placed it carefully and tenderly in his pocket-book; kissed her once more, and, with a noiseless step, left the room to seek his children. Oh, little pebbles of the brook of life and love! how sure and unerring is the aim with which, at moments like this, ye are slung into the forehead of giant nature, bringing him prostrate to a level with your own littleness! How the blow sinks down into his heart, making it heavier than the nether millstone, and as bitter as the waters of Marah! John Halloran could but weep now; there was no help for it. His tears and kisses fell together on their heads. He lifted their soft, dimpled hands to his bearded cheeks, and pressed long, loving kisses on their rosy lips. But it must end. One lingering look and fond caress, and he tore himself from them. Perhaps something whispered that he should never see them thus again; that one of that twain would flit heavenward, and leave only the vision of a shrined angel in his memory.

And now he is out on the lawn. The full orbed moon sheds an unspeakable splendor upon the scene, silvering over the antique gables and quaint chimney-stacks of the old house, and throwing tremulous shadows through the foliage on the deep set windows. When should he see it again?

CHAPTER III.

"What? Thundering to be heard, Old Land?
Ho! bravely and boldly done;
Now! where are thy children gone?
Ay, there, support her, she's weak;
See, see how her cold limbs shake.
Let her lean on that RUSTED brand!
They have treated thee ill, old dame,
And thou blushest with rage and shame!
Thou'rt astir,—a fearful token
That the o'erstrung bow is broken."

A GLEAM of sunshine, that flickered through the dense foliage which shadowed the window, fell warm and golden over Mary Halloran's face, and awoke her from her deep but uneasy slumbers. Surprised to find that she had passed the night on her couch instead of the bed, she could not, at first, remember how it was. She passed her hand over her forehead, then glanced around the room with a wild and frightened look; and, when she found it empty, she flew toward the bed and tore back the curtains. But she saw that it had been untouched, and a low cry of anguish escaped her lips. She tottered toward the bell-rope and pulled it, then fell heavily on the couch from which she had risen, her face as white as the cambric pillows on which she leaned.

- "Did you ring, ma'am?" said Nora, coming in.
- "Where is Mr. Halloran, Nora?" she asked, as calmly as she could.
 - "It's altogether uncertain, ma'am, if he is not here.
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Troth and I thought he was snug in his bed yet," replied Nora, endeavoring to conceal her own anxiety.

"My husband is not here, Nora: he's gone. Something dreadful has happened. I know and feel it. I have felt it on me these many days," she said, folding her long white hands together, and rocking herself to and fro, while a torrent of tears rolled over her cheeks.

"Why, surely, now, it's nothing onusual for a gintleman to be out airly at this season of the year. I've h'ard him say, God save him, that he'd rayther be out when the dew is on the fern-leaves and the birds whistling through the morning air, than to see the grandest show in the kingdom. He'll be in presently, and have to wait for his breakfast, if I don't be stirring."

"Nora, is Mr. Halloran's horse in the stable?" she asked.

"And how should he be, surely, and Mister Halloran out on the hill-side, or foreninst there at Holy Cross, on his back?" replied Nora, cheeringly.

"There is one thing will settle all this doubt. I dread the worst; and yet—my God!—it is necessary for me to know it. If they should be gone, how can I bear it? Help me, O my Father! thou whose ears are never closed to the plaint of thy suffering ones; endow me with strength and fortitude to bear the storms which are gathering about my head.

'Jesus, lover of my soul,

Let me to thy refuge fly,

While the nearer waters roll,

While the tempest's wrath is nigh.'"

And even then, while her troubled soul poured out its cry for aid, she felt calmer and stronger. An almighty arm was about her, and would bear her up as the bitter floods rolled by now; and in the sorrowful days that were to come, He would be her solace and defense.

She went to an old oak cabinet, and, turning the key, opened the door. One glance sufficed to show her that the shelves were empty. "Yes, they are gone," she murmured; "gone."

"And what is it, Maire Bhan asthore," said Nora, who had come close to her and placed her strong arm tenderly and caressingly around her slender, drooping form,—"what is it that's gone, my jewel?"

"All gone! Sword, spurs, the green uniform, epaulets, chapeau, and all. Gone with my darling to the wild hills of Tipperary, where the cruel hunters will snare and cage him,—my eagle-heart, whose worst fault is that it would be too near the sun. Oh! oh!"

"And what is this, suillish machree?" stooping down to pick up a small twisted note which had fallen unperceived when the door was opened. "It looks like his own writing, surely."

"It is—it is!" cried Mrs. Halloran, running her eye rapidly over its contents. The blood mounted to her pale cheeks, and something like exultation lit up her features, but faded rapidly, and she leaned on Nora's faithful bosom cold and shivering. "Let me lie down, Nora dear, and read it to me. I cannot see very clearly. Perhaps I did not read it right," she said, feebly.

"Sweet wife" (Nora read), "I have courage to die for my country, but not enough to bear your tears and a mutual farewell. But cheer up. Our separation will be short. When we meet again, the old Sunburst will wave its folds of green and gold over Ireland,—the beacon of her freedom. She will lift up her bowed head and be a nation once more, and our children will be no longer helots, but freemen. Adieu, sweet wife. Kiss the dear ones, and tell Nora I recommend ye all to her loving care."

"And so she will lift up her head, alanna," cried Nora, in a transport, "if he's to be the leader, and had a few like hisself to help. It will be done; an' the English, with their red coat sogers, and their black-coat parsons, and their sneaking tithe-men, drivers, and the devil knows what beside, will be hunted off our Irish acres in a jiffy, and lave our beautiful country to shinfane, the right owners, by troth."

"Nora!" said Mrs. Halloran.

"Faith, ma'am, and I can see nothing to be crying afther, at all. If I only knowed where to go and how to go, I'd be off on the wildest Kerry colt I could find to help, only in respect to yourself, suillish machree, I couldn't lave you unprotected. But there is one shall go in my place, please God, and that's Dennis Byrne; and if he's kilt, it'll be the best thing could happen in such a cause. May God and the Blessed Virgin help the right."

"Amen!" said Mrs. Halloran, in a low, fervent tone; "we are in our Father's hands. We are under the protection of our blessed and dear Lady. We may suffer,—oh, yes, that we must expect,—but, in the end, peace and rest must come. Go down, dear Nora; and the moment anything happens, let me know."

"Yes," said Nora, pausing in the old oak-paneled passage to shake her fist toward a closed door; "and if you hadn't got what you did in good time, you'd be on his track, cross-bred mule that you are; but, thanks to the scalding tay that lathered your shins, it'll be some time before you can do any mischief, black informer that you are." Then, as if relieved, she walked quietly and swiftly down to the kitchen to begin her usual day's labor,—a labor which her cheerful and faithful heart and indus-

trious hands made so light that she not unfrequently had more time to herself than any other domestic at Glendariff.

No event of importance occurred that day. If a stranger had been passing through the country, he would have lingered on the road to gaze down on the tranquil beauty of Glendariff, and thought it must be the abode of happiness and contentment. He would have known that plenty teemed from those rolling lands, covered with a verdure and luxuriance of vegetation which indicated the fertility of the soil, and those sunny slopes, rich in waving grain, which, as the wind-tide ebbed and flowed over it, swayed and undulated with a motion as graceful and harmonious as the ocean-billow when no storm is on it. In the distance, through a natural vista, his eye would have fallen on the gray ruins of Holy Cross, their desolate grandeur and beautiful decay gilded by the sunbeam, while here and there, through the moss-grown arches, the bright-blue waters of the Suire might be seen rippling on toward the sea, uttering the same mysterious numbers that it sang of old, like Time, hymning the wrongs, the evils, and the sins of men as it rolls solemnly on toward eternity. And then he would have turned away from the view of Glendariff-beautiful in its antique style and picturesque site-from its abundance, from its productive fields-to go past the abodes of poverty, which the natural and rich resources of the land had no blessing for, and see men and women worn down with ineffectual labor, bowed and gloomy on the inadequate returns it would afford them, or characterized by a levity and recklessness which, with the livery of want that they wore, preached bitter homilies by its mockery.

As evening wore on, Mrs. Halloran's anxieties increased. She could think of but one thing, and that was the ap-

proaching desperate struggle. The very indefinite knowledge she possessed heightened and augmented her terror. When? where? what? were the questions that haunted her. The children shrunk back, rendered timid by her silence and paleness, and Mrs. Shea retired angry and voluble from her because she did not open her lips when she went in to report to her concerning the health of Donald More.

"An' it's in purgatory I've got before my time," she complained to Nora, "with that screeching, swearing pagan up-stairs, that was so crazy to get out this morn' that he swears a big oath, and gives a lape, when down he comes flat to the floor, laving me the immortal honor, sure, of picking him up; an' troth if he does it agen, honey, I'll get the pitchfork to toss him in. It was all through your bad doings, Nora Brady, and you ought to nurse him."

"Thank you, dear Mistress Shea; I don't look up to any such grandeur as to nurse such a great gentleman as Donald Dhu," said Nora, laughing, as Mrs. Shea flounced out with a bowl of chocolate for the invalid.

That night Nora sat silent and sad by the fireside, her fingers busy shifting from one needle to the other the stitches of a stocking, her eyes fixed thoughtfully on the glowing turf, her lips silent. No sound was heard but the chirping of a cricket in some warm corner. Ere long the silence was broken by the echo of heavy, slow footsteps. She thought it might be Dennis Byrne, and tripped out on the lawn to meet him; but it was Father McCarthy.

"God save us, your reverence," she said, kneeling for his blessing, which he gave.

"And how is Mrs. Halloran, my child?" he asked.

"She's poorly enough, sir."

"And Mr. Halloran,—where is he?"

"We do not know exactly, father: he left home in the night, and it's much comfort she needs, poor thing."

"Heaven help the poor child!" said the priest, in a compassionate tone. "Where is she, Nora?"

"She's in the room, sir, Mr. Halloran's books and things is in, where he used to read and write, your reverence. Shall I go and tell her?"

"No, no; it is not necessary," he replied, hurrying in with a heavy heart, for Mary Halloran was the child of his only sister, and he loved her well.

Nora could not sit still or rest: so, throwing the stocking aside, she walked with a quick pace down to the lodge, once inhabited by a porter who kept the gate. But it was dismantled and almost ruined now, with its low stone walls covered with ivy and creepers, and which John Halloran had allowed to stand, because it was a picturesque feature at Glendariff. She went to the broken casement which looked out on the road, and, leaning her arms on the low sill, stood watching for the blacksmith of Kildare. She had not waited long before he came.

"Nora asthore," he said, starting at the sound of her voice, "is it waiting for me that you are here? It's no safe place for one like you, dear."

"And why isn't it a safe place, Dennis Byrne?"

"Because the times is bad."

"What is the matter with the times, sure? It seems to me the times is good enough; and if men was as good as the times, we shouldn't have English sogers poking their noses into everybody's business, and kith and kin hounding each other, selling their own flesh and blood like nagur slaves."

"Whist, Nora dear! it isn't safe to talk out," he replied, looking furtively about him, and speaking in a whisper. "Is Mr. Halloran up yonder?"

"No; and that's what I wanted to spake to you about. Have you heard any news to-day?—but come in; it'll be safe altogether there," she said.

"May-be not," he replied; "may-be not. There's sogers lurking about Glendariff. They're watching for Mister Halloran."

"They'll have their watching for their trouble, then. He's not here, nor won't be again in a hurry, accordin' to my judgment. But I've got something to say, Dennis, and I might as well say it first as last. It's a dark day when it come to my heart, and a sorrowful one when it comes out. But it's no use; may-be it'll blow over and may-be it won't: anyway, God's will be done. We was to be married in the spring coming. I have fifty pounds and a cow to begin with. You have enough for a poor boy to settle with; and I won't say I looked to the time with sorrow. I loved to think of being in my own cot, and keeping it cheery and thrifty for you, avourneen, and, troth, I had my own dreams of happiness. But they're over now. It cannot be——"

"What's that you're saying, Nora Brady, afther promising me these three years?" exclaimed Dennis Byrne, aghast. "Don't be trifling with a fellow in that way, Nora; joke with anything but that, and I'll laugh with you—"

"You h'ard every word I said, and I'm just as much in airnest, Dennis, as if it was my dying day. And you may give me up intirely if you like. I can very quick give you back your love-tokens. But my mind's made up, and, what's more, I've taken a vow."

"In the name of the Blessed Virgin, woman, what are you talking about?" he asked, half beside himself.

"It's aisy enough explaining what I say," she said, laying her hand on his shoulder. "You know, Dennis,

as well as I do, what's in the wind, and Mister Halloran's in it, where every true Irishman ought to be; and, if he's helped by them that have rayson enough to fight, it'll be a glorious day for Ould Ireland. I know that, and want it, too, if I am only a poor girl. But mind, Dennis, may-be the rebellion will fail,—God help them that's risked all they have on the chance,—and, if it does, I've made a vow before Heaven, on the cross, never to wed you if you don't help them that's willing to spill their blood for you, and if sorrow and distress and penury come to Glendariff, never to marry until all is right again with them I love. If they suffer, I suffer; if they wander, I wander. And now be off with you; for that is Nora Brady's Vow."

CHAPTER IV.

"But alas for his country!—her pride is gone by,
And that spirit is broken which never would bend;
O'er the ruin her children in secret must sigh,
For 'tis treason to love her, and death to defend.
Unprized are her sons, till they've learned to betray;
Undistinguished they live, if they shame not their sires;
And the torch that would light them through dignity's way
Must be caught from the pile where their country expires."

MOORE.

"Nora Brady, you have done me a great wrong this day," said Dennis Byrne, grasping her arm, as she turned to leave him, while his heart swelled with indignation and grief. He had loved Nora long and faithfully; early and late had he toiled, that he might surround her with homely domestic comforts when she entered his house as its mistress; and now, when just on the eve of the realization of his bright hopes, to be told that "it could not be," to have all those beautiful dreams so rudely dashed out,—it was almost more than he could endure.

"Now, be a man, Dennis darling," said Nora, wiping the tears away from her face. "If I can bear it, you can, surely. I didn't say at all that I didn't love you, or that I was going to play a false game with you, mavourneen. I only want you to be patient, and wait may-be a year, may-be longer, in respect to the great throuble that's come on the two we love, and who has been the best friends we ever had, and that needs our help as much as we ever needed theirs; that is, if things go wrong with them, that would lay down their lives to make 'em right."

(41) .

"I see no rayson yet why we shouldn't marry. I love John Halloran,—ay, the very sod his feet presses,—an' for his sake I'd give up everything but you, Nora; but why we can't sarve him an' his as well when we're man an' wife, as now, bates me out intirely."

"That's because you're a pittiogue, Dennis Byrne," said Nora, indignantly. "How do I know what's coming to pass? If poverty comes to Glendariff, or rayther if poverty chases them away from Glendariff, I, for one, shouldn't like to hoard up the gold that I airned in their service; an' who knows but that I shall have to cross the sea? There'll be enough for Norah Brady's hands to do, without having a master to the fore, to bid me here and ordher me there. And let this be the last of it entirely: if you choose to wait for me, wait; if you don't—be off as fast as your two legs can carry you."

Dennis, the stout blacksmith of Kildare, was silent for some time. He knew by Nora's manner that her resolution was taken and not to be moved, and, although he felt angry enough at what he considered her unreasonableness, the thought of giving her up was like death. Next to her he loved John Halloran. They had been playmates together; indeed, the same breasts had suckled both in their infancy, for Byrne's mother had the nursing of the young heir of Glendariff until he was weaned, and the boys had grown up together, every year strengthening the tie, which in Ireland is as strong as that of kindred, until manhood separated them; and each in his sphere retained the old love and the old interest, and found many opportunities of serving The friendship of John Halloran had cheered and brightened the humble life of his foster-brother; it had saved him from many an extortion and much injustice; and the consciousness of it gave confidence and energy to his manhood, for he knew that he was his earthly providence, and would never let harm, that money or influence could avert, blight his life. He thought of all this now, and the merry sports of "long ago,"—of the days' fishing in the Suire, their wild adventures and long excursions to the Kerry Mountains, and the delicious loitering among the old ruins of Holy Cross. He could not but serve John Halloran, now that dark days threatened him. He felt ashamed of his momentary selfishness, and at last said,—

"Nora, mo seact n-anam astig tu* are you; but let it be as you say. You have tould me what you will do, but what I'm to do is what I doesn't know. I don't even know where Misther Halloran is, God save him. I have heard rumors of a rebellion, but where it's to break out it's more than I can tell, an' I wish I did, for, bedad! I'd like to be in the thick of it. But there's one thing, a suillish mahuil agus machree,"† he said, brightening up: "he often tould me, if he got into throuble with the government, as he said from a boy he always intended, and was hunted by the Saxon hounds, that I must seek him beyant the clouds-that is, in a den so high up on Ballyhowry Mountain that the wild craythurs have never made their lair in it. And so good-by, Nora: the moon's up, and I'll run down to Larry Ragan's cabin an' hire the suit and wallet of the old baccah man that's been sick in it these two months, and be off before day. One kiss, Nora darling."

"The Blessed Mother of God have you in her keeping, my cœn-buy deelish," said Nora, as she allowed him to take the farewell kiss he asked, while tears overflowed her eyes. "Good-by, Dennis dear: warm will be the sheda veha when you come back. God's holy angels go

^{*} Seven times dearer than my soul.

[†] Light of my eyes and heart.

with you. But wait one minute! I'd like to forgotten the very thing above all that must be thought of. Here—hide this about you somewhere: it's for Mister Halloran, if you find him where you're going to, and give it to him with Nora Brady's humble service and love, and tell him to have no uneasiness in respect to Mrs. Halloran and the childer, for if I ever lave or forsake them in the dark hour may God forsake me. Now hurry off, Dennis; and don't forget the limp when you get the wallet across your shoulders."

"I'll engage you never saw such limping done afore, by a fellow wid sound legs," said Dennis Byrne, laughing, as he deposited the little package she had given him, in the depths of his breast-pocket.

"Now go on, and don't be afther looking back, alanna, for fear of the black luck," said Nora, pushing him away.

Cutting a stout black-thorn by the roadside, Dennis Byrne started on what might have been considered a wild-goose chase, if the results of his journey had not proved that his instincts had guided him aright. ing mostly by night, and begging a sup and morsel here and there on the roadside, evading with success the parties of English soldiers that dashed from time to time across his path, keeping his ears open when, two or three times, he was invited to spend the night by the turf fire of some hospitable peasant, and saying but little, he heard that a battle had been fought in Tipperary, and that the patriotic band who dared to strike for freedom and their native land had been defeated and routed. Not daring to ask a question (for he was among strangers), the news quickened his steps, and after many days' wearisome travel he reached the chain of high hills which, lifting their summits to the clouds, and broken into a thousand scenes of the wildest

grandeur, whose steep defiles and beetling cliffs were full of sublimity and magnificence, threw their broad shadows over the fruitful valleys of Munster. Following sometimes the steep and rugged balleagh, or forcing his way cautiously along the windings of a narrow wolf-track, he scaled one rocky height after another, deterred neither by their perils nor bleakness from the accomplishment of his faithful purpose. Occasionally he sought the shelter of some sheeling perched high up among the cliffs, and whose poverty-stricken inmates made him welcome to a meal of potatoes and milk, but could give him no information of what was passing below. Up in that wild region they heard but little of what was passing among their fellow-men; nor cared they much, for in the sharp struggle for existence which for evermore saddened their life, in the grasp and clutch for the barest means to avert starvation and bitter want, they had no time to spare on the concerns of others, or to waste in dreams which their life-long shadow had made idle and profitless to them. They bore with sullen patience the evils of their lot, and endured the sweat and labor entailed by Adam on his race, without, many, many times, the reward of the bread promised.

It was late in the afternoon when Dennis Byrne, at the imminent peril of life and limb, reached the cave, high up on one of the highest peaks of the Ballyhowry Mountains, which John Halloran and himself had discovered years ago. But it was lonely. No living creature had disturbed the stones which they had piled up at its entrance. And it was now that the stout heart of the blacksmith of Kildare failed him, and the fruitlessness of his toils overwhelmed him; and he sat down on a moss-grown rock and wept like a child. Relieved by this outburst of tears, he sought a more sheltered place, for it was bitterly cold,

and, taking a crust from his wallet, moistened it with whisky and ate it, after which he cleared away the great stones one by one from the entrance of the cave, and gathered moss and dead fern to make himself a lair to sleep in that night. At length, his arrangements being completed, he threw himself down to rest, which he had never in his life of toil needed more than he did then. He cast his eyes abroad: the last gleam of sunlight had fled away like gold-plumaged birds from the crags and peaks of the neighboring mountains, and the gray mist like a silent flood had risen from the valley, and enveloped him until he almost imagined himself to be the lone inhabitant of some desolate island. He felt awed by the deep unbroken silence and dreary solitude of his situation, and, drawing his well-worn rosary out of his pocket, he knelt down and devoutly recited it, after which he crept into the cavern, and was soon sleeping calmly and heavily.

He might have slept two or three hours,—he could not tell,—when he was suddenly awakened by something falling heavily upon him. Starting up with a wild cry, he grappled with the intruder, who was a man, and who seemed powerful enough in frame, but from some cause or other feeble and helpless.

"Who are you at all?" cried Dennis, while a cold moisture started to his lips. "If you're a friend, spake; if you're a foe, bedad, it'll not be long before you find your broken bones in the glen below!" But a stifled groan was his only response: then there was a dead silence, and the man lay limp and heavy on his arm, and his low, quick breathing gradually ceased.

"Christ defend us! the poor soul is dead; and I'd rayther it'ud be a wild wolf than a dead man, to spend the night with," exclaimed Dennis, while the cold drops rolled over his face; but now a faint moan reassured him,

A dark cloud which had obscured the moon sailed slowly away, and her clear, bright rays fell full on the white, upturned face which Dennis Byrne supported on his shoulder. He looked down on it for an instant in wild amaze; he pushed back the matted hair from the bold forehead, and exclaimed,—

"Holy St. Patrick! but it's him hisself!" Then he laid the head of John Halloran down on a rude pillow which he made of his cloak, moving it as gently and as tenderly with his great rough hands and awkward limbs as if he had been tending an infant, and got out his flask and poured a few drops of potheen between the lips of the exhausted man, and unbuckled his stock: all of which seemed to revive him. Soon he opened his eyes and looked around him, then into the face of Byrne, whom he recognized at once, and grasped his hand.

"True—true; faithful to the last," he said, in a faint voice. "How are they at Glendariff?"

"Well and safe, your honor; but what's this—and this? What's the throuble, sir?" said Dennis, pointing to some black stains on Mr. Halloran's shirt-bosom.

"I was wounded, Dennis: not badly. Loss of blood, though, has weakened me. I wish I might have died; for to survive the ruin of all I planned and hoped for, is more than I can bear. All is lost. At Ballingarry a few desperate hearts periled their all in the chances of battle. They expected aid from dastards, who promised but failed to come to their succor; and all was lost. Of these noble and glorious men, some are prisoners of our foes, and will meet the doom of felons; others, like myself, are hiding until the hour arrives for us to fly into an exile of poverty and obscurity."

"But surely your honor will return to Glendariff? Sure,

sir, Mrs. Halloran's crazy with sorrow in respect to you, and Nora's put me off intirely," said Dennis, scarcely comprehending all his meaning.

"I fear I shall never see Glendariff again. I must fly to France or America: not to shun death or danger, but ignominy. I shall find means to send for my family. Of course they will be stripped of everything. Oh, my God! my poor Mary and the little ones! But, Dennis, you must go back, man; you must hasten back and stand by them all. I charge you to protect them until I can bring them to me, wherever I may go."

"I think it 'ud be better intirely for me to stand by your honor's self," said Byrne, while his broad chest heaved with emotion.

"That cannot be, my friend. I know your faithfulness; and, in leaving you with those who are dearer to me than life, I shall feel that they have not only a friend, but a protector," said John Halloran.

"I will stay; I will do anything your honor wishes; an' it's little I'm able to do, but I'll endeavor to do it right. But let it all alone now, sir, and go to sleep. When the sun rises I will call you. There's a snug bed of heather within our old nest, and your honor can make yourself aisy in respect to any one's comin', seein' that I'm goin' to watch till morn."

Heart-broken, and enfeebled by loss of blood, John Halloran, thankful for an hour's repose, crept into the cave, and was soon asleep. The next morning he awoke refreshed and strengthened. Dennis had kindled a fire of fagots in a sheltered corner, and made such preparations as his wallet afforded, for breakfast.

"What is that you have on, Dennis? I think it will help me in my escape to the coast,—that beggar's gown and bag. Can you spare it?"

"Your honor's welcome to it intirely, only it 'ud be a disgrace to see such-like rags on your shoulders, sir. And it's a narrow chance I'm afeared your honor'll have, for the whole country's swarming with red-coats," said Dennis Byrne.

"I have friends a little lower down on the mountain. That wild son of old Sheehan's, whose life I saved some years ago, is at home. I saw him yesterday, and he has promised to get me off as soon as his vessel drops down from the north."

"An' he's engaged in the free trade, sir, is he?"

"Yes. He's a smuggler," said John Halloran.

"Here's good luck to him, then, and to all that's up for their rights," said Byrne, "and may he get your honor safe away till the outcry is over."

"I'll trust him. I should not have chosen him; but I trust him," was the short response.

"And where is your honor going to?"

"I scarcely know. I wish to go to America; but they shall know at home, whether it be in France or the United States. I am without a shilling; and circumstances must guide me. I am like a piece of drift-wood, and God alone knows where or how I may be stranded."

"Your honor'll pardon me, an' poor Nora too," said Dennis, fumbling in his pocket, "but she sent this to your honor, with her humble service and love, and hopes it may help you, sir."

"And what is it?" said John Halloran, holding the little package neatly sewed up in brown silk in his hand, and turning it over and over with a troubled curiosity. Then he opened it, and found, neatly folded within, fifty pounds in notes and gold. "I cannot take it!" he exclaimed, while tears gushed from his eyes.

"And surely it 'ud break poor Nora's heart to think

you scorned it, sir. She has no use for it surely, for we're not thinking of ourselves until the dark days are gone by, an' troth she knows it's safer in your honor's hands than in her own. Anyway, I'll lave it here, sir, if you won't take it; for I wouldn't dare show my face at Glendariff if I fetched it back. Why, it 'ud never do, your honor."

"Oh, Heaven! Well," said Mr. Halloran, with deep emotion, "tell Nora I thank her for her loan. I won't think but that I can return it to her, one of these days, tenfold. But it is time for us to part, Dennis. You must hasten back with my sore heart's best love to them all. Put a kiss on Grace's little head for me, and tell Desmond to be a man and take care of his mother and sister. Perhaps even now my poor Mary has heard that I am killed or taken, and the shock has broken her heart. But you must get there as fast as you can, and tell them I am safe and well; and give this to my wife," said John Halloran, severing one of the thick brown curls from his forehead with his knife. "Give my love, too, to Nora, and tell her to stay by them,—that it comforts me to know she is there."

"But the gown an' wallet, your honor?" said Dennis, in a choking voice, while he pretended to undo the fastenings of his beggar garb to hide his tears.

"No: I do not need it. I fear it is a disguise I could not counterfeit well. Good-by, faithful friend. I hoped a few days ago that we should deliver you and your brethren from the yoke which binds ye; but all hope is wrecked. Oh, God! O my country! when thy own sons forsake thee, and turn their eyes coldly on thy misery, what is left but despair? Oh, recreants to all sacred rights! Oh, helots, who wear your chains in inglorious rest, would that I could rouse you! would that

I could kindle the flame in your cold hearts that is consuming mine, that the death-blow might be given to the foe and the oppressor! But it is vain: my wishes—my wild hopes—my prayers—all are vain. Farewell, my friend."

Dennis Byrne wrung the offered hand of the brokenhearted man. Awed by the outburst of his grief, he could not speak, but turned and walked swiftly away, to carry he poor comfort his tidings would afford to the lonely and sorrowful hearts at Glendariff.

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CHAPTER V.

"But now, too great for fetters grown,
Too proud to bend the slavish knee,
Loved Erin mocks the tyrant's thrall,
And firmly vows she will be free.

"But mark you treacherous, stealthy knave
That bends beneath his country's ban:
Shall HE dash out a nation's hope,
The anti-Irish Irishman?"

ONE bright sunny morning, just four weeks after Dennis Byrne left Glendariff, he returned, footsore and weary Parting with John Halloran under the gloomy circumstances of their last interview had been the saddest trial which had ever wrung the stout heart of the blacksmith of Kildare, and, almost unmanned, his tears now and then fell in torrents, sprinkling the wild rocky paths he was descending. Once he met a cowherd searching for a stray heifer, and not long after, in a narrow gorge, came abreast of two or three shy, sullen-looking men, wearing a look of terror on their countenances, who, having been into the valley to buy meal and potatoes, had heard and seen enough to make them fly back to their mountain sheelings, perfectly satisfied to forego the necessaries they were in pursuit of, for the agreeable certainty of knowing that they had escaped hanging and quartering. Dennis soon discovered that their alarm was not groundless; for as he approached nearer to the lowlands he perceived detachments of English soldiers galloping in every direc-

tion over the country; he saw that they were stationed at the farm-houses and at the cross-roads, and knew that, unless the providence of God delivered him, he should have a narrow escape, if indeed he did not really fall into their hands. But danger and peril always whet the edge of an Irishman's wit; his love of adventure imparts a zest to the most unequal rencontre, while all-the chivalry and will of his nature are roused to defeat the purposes of those who would trample on him; and, when he finds that mere physical strength cannot serve him, his keen wit, like a legion, is ready to grapple with an army of difficulties. Dennis Byrne's disguise was perfect, and his limp inimitable, although it added a heavy weight to every mile; while with the vacant, simple look he assumed, and a brogue which was absolutely terrible, he succeeded in passing unharmed more than one Saxon cordon, who were engaged in torturing and tormenting the harmless peasantry with an abuse of authority of which the Vandals of a remoter age might have been ashamed. Whenever he spied them in the distance, he began to sing, with a voice which indicated a pair of lungs as tough and strong as his own great bellows in the smithy at Kildare, some wild Gaelic song, which, to those who were near enough to hear the words, was about as intelligible as the clatter of a mill-wheel, until they surrounded him with curses and questions not a few; when, by his half-witted answers, his rough Connaught brogue, assumed for the occasion, and his idiotic expressions of wonder, he not only secured the freedom of the road, but succeeded in learning much that he wished to know, and on several occasions absolutely received as many shillings as blows.

He learned that the principal chiefs in the late outbreak had been arrested and imprisoned: it was believed and hoped they would be hung, certainly transported. He heard John Halloran's name loaded with imprecations and curses, as one who had escaped; they feared he had got safe out of the country; if not, such means were provided for his arrest as must certainly prove effectual in his capture.

At last Dennis found himself within the Park-gate at Glendariff. As he approached the house, he saw at once how it was. Sentinels in the uniform of the 4th regiment of Highlanders were stationed here and there about the mansion and grounds; and if at first he felt surprised at the circumstance of no guard being placed at the lodge, he understood it now; but he thanked God fervently that the hunted fugitive was far away, and not likely to be led unwarily into this well-contrived ambuscade. As to himself, "he didn't care a snap if they took him prisoner; it was just what he wanted, unless they sent him up to Dublin, bedad! which would put another face intirely on the matter."

The shutters were all closed, and only the kitchen-door was open. Through this he saw Nora flitting around as usual; perhaps more heavily and silently, for no wild melody, trilled out with the gladness of a pure and honest heart, now kept time to the motion of her busy hands. Limping up toward the kitchen, thinking at the moment only of Nora, he was suddenly grasped by the arm on one side, while from the other a bayonet presented before him glittered in his eyes. He turned, and found himself in the custody of two soldiers, who demanded the countersign.

"De what? My granny used to know all de signs o' de wedder; but I niver was wise dat way," said Dennis, dropping the corners of his eyes and his mouth together.

"What be your business, and where be you from last?" asked the old soldier, gruffly.

"An' surely yer honor's scaret me wits out ov me

intirely. I almost forgot whedder I was ever born or not," exclaimed Dennis, the picture of a fool.

"Come, ye hirplin' gaberlunzie, to Captain Saunders': he's the chiel that'll make ye glow'r. Hech, sirs! but ye'll tell him where ye come frae last," said the Scotchman, laying his hand on Dennis Byrne's ragged collar and leading him into John Halloran's library, where Captain Saunders with one or two of his officers was at breakfast. He was a man past middle age, with the harsh physiognomy of his nation; his hair was crisp and gray, cut as close to his head as a Covenanter's, while his small, keen gray eyes were almost hidden by the shaggy, black brows which overhung them.

"Now, I rede ye, speak the truth," whispered the sergeant to Dennis, after he had paused for an instant, bolt upright, to make a military salute to his commanding officer.

"Who are you?" asked Captain Saunders, after hearing his subordinate's report.

"Only a poor innocent baccah man, beggin' here an' there a crust an' a bone, yer honor," replied Dennis, composedly.

"And do you know the premises you are on? That I could imprison you, transport you, for daring to put your foot on these grounds without authority? Oh, you are a douse laddie, my ragged freend!" said Captain Saunders.

"Christ pardon an' save uz, an' where am I at all, thin? yer worship axes me; an' surely it's I ought to be axin' you where I be, seein' you're here, an' I, a poor baccah lad, wid his staff an' bag, jest from de hills of Tipperary," replied Dennis.

^{*} It is said that the Scotch officers and soldiers, greatly to their honor, at this period in Ireland, behaved like men from whose bosom humanity had not taken flight.

"The devil you are!" exclaimed the captain, excited by this piece of news; "and pray what were you after in that Gehenna?"

"Is dat a Shanghai, sir? My grannie had lots o' hins, but I niver h'ard her mintion any sich breed as dat," said Dennis, looking perfectly innocent, while the young officers, angry, but amused, endeavored to suppress a laugh.

"I say, rascal, what business had ye in Tipperary?" roared Captain Saunders.

"I dunno, yer honor. I h'ard I was born dare; but, bein' a poor orphin, I can't swear to de fact, and be rayson of me beravement, for I was a destitute orphin, yer honor, I had to take de wallet on me shoulder, and ax de hospitality of me neighbors an' the counthry peoples; but, save us, sirs! I'm druv off me ould bate intirely by de sogering an' fighting dat's goin' on, sure. Betune de sogers an' de rèbels, I bin almost murthered intirely; de sogers takin' me for a rebel, an' de rebels takin' me for a divil of a informer; an', yer honor, I was glad to git out of it intirely," said Dennis, with an emphasis and strength of brogue which was deafening even to Scotch ears.

"Gude's sake, mon, ye deserve hanging for the thud* and claver ye make. Can't ye speak the Queen's English?" exclaimed Captain Saunders, about the corners of whose eyes might be seen an incipient wrinkle of mirth.

"Lord's sake, sir! Can yer honor spake in de grand ould Celtic diction, dat I bin used to all my born days? If you can do dat, sir, I'm at your sarvice from mornin' till night: me tongue gets on de right groove den, sir, an' runs like a stame-carridge; but de English is a furrin'

^{*} Confused noise.

lingo to me, an' my tongue goes blunderin' over de brogue of it, till I don't 'zactly know what I says myself."

"No; and I'm glad I don't, you pawkey," said Captain Saunders. "Here, Jock Hazel, search this fellow. He's more knave than fool, in my opinion."

And without ceremony they proceeded to search the person of Dennis. They tore away the shreds of lining from his ragged hat, looked under the borrowed and rusty old wig he wore, emptied his wallet, and poked carefully among the bones and crusts which were scattered on the floor. They divested him of his coat, shoes, and stockings; in fact, the inquisition extended from his head to his heels, leaving none of his tattered garments unexplored. But of course they found nothing, except the dark, glossy curl of John Halloran's hair, which Captain Saunders held carefully, yet cautiously, between his forefinger and thumb, while the investigation proceeded. Concluding their fruitless search, they gave him permission to put on his clothes; when Captain Saunders said,—

"I am not yet satisfied, you vagabond, but that you're a rebel."

"Me!—ullalu—Chorp an daoul! Me!" shouted Dennis, with a wild look of assumed terror.

"Yes; and you are my prisoner, until I am satisfied that you are a leal subject of her majesty's. If you attempt to leave the grounds of this—eh—ah—Glendariff, you'll find a bullet in your head before you know what you're after."

"An' may I stay, yer honor, undher yer lordship's purtiction?" exclaimed Dennis, apparently overjoyed; "an' can I have a little clane straw to slape on, an' a sup to ate? An' will yer honor be afther givin' a poor, disolate orphin dat bit o' hair betune yer fingers?"

"For what? Whose hair is it? I suspect, if this hair

could talk it would tell tales. It is strangely like the hair of that portrait in the drawing-room, Donald," said Captain Saunders, addressing one of the officers.

"Dher chorp agus manim!" * exclaimed Dennis; "an' thin yer honor's eyes desave you intirely; for dat hair belonged to a cousin's husband of me own, dat died wid de small-pox last Whi'suntide."

In an instant the dark curl was lying at Dennis Byrne's feet, while, half wild with the dread of contagion, Captain Saunders vociferously ordered him out of the house, and called for brandy, camphor, and vinegar. Glad to escape, Dennis snatched up the precious hair, and, again thrusting it into his bosom, was led under guard to the kitchen, where Nora, with her back to the door, was bending over some fine article of dress she was ironing.

"Mistress," said the soldier, "here's a fellow you'll be gude enough to take care of: he's a sonsie-looking chiel, an' nae doot he'll have your wits in a creel afore night."

Poor Dennis! This was the most anxious moment of all. Suppose Nora should turn suddenly and exhibit an emotion which would betray all? But, brave Nora, she was not one to break down in that way. She raised herself up, and looked at both; she recognized her sweetheart at a glance, but, except the quickened and joyous throbbing at her heart, she was quite calm.

"And what is it I'm to do with him?" she asked, scornfully.

"He's to be fed and housed,—that's the order, lassie. He's a prisoner," said the Scotchman, laughing.

"It's well for them that's made so many beggars to have 'em fed. It's an ould game, well understood in

^{*} By my soul and body.

Ireland, robbing Peter to pay Paul. What do you want?" she said, turning her eyes full on Dennis Byrne.

"Why, ma'am," he whimpered, "I'm a poor orphin from Tipperary hills, an' 'ud like a bowl o' stirabout, an' a rasher, an' a mug o' ale or whisky, an' a could fowl, if you has de likes of it by you."

"I shall have to set the table for the gentleman from Tipperary," she said, with a light, merry laugh. "Perhaps yer honor'll take a bit of venison, and some bottled sherry?"

"Anything your ladyship plazes!"

"If I was a man, I'd shake you to smithereens," said Nora, bustling around, while Sergeant Hazel, with a laugh, wished her good luck of the bargain he had brought her, and went away. Neither of them uttered a word until he was out of hearing; for he was too good a soldier to go out of sight.

"Nora dear!"

"Thanks be to God, Dennis Byrne, that you're back in safety."

Both spoke in Irish. "Did you see him, Dennis?"

"I did. I saw him, and think he is safe."

"Oh, thanks be to God!" exclaimed Nora, while tears flowed over her cheeks. "Now tell me about it, dear." He told her. "Oh, how glad this news will make the broken heart in there! Dennis, she's been drooping like a flower when the first bitter wind from the Reek blows on it; but, oh, Dennis Byrne, there's worse news for you to hear yet!"

"What?" he asked, while his cheek paled.

"The lady and her children are poor,—so poor,—so very poor, Dennis. You and I, with our strong arms and stout hearts, is richer than they," said Nora, with a short sob. "Glendariff is theirs no longer."

"Not theirs? Whose then, in the name of the world, is it?"

"And who but Donald Dhu More, the vile informer, that's a disgrace to his blood, his name, and his country,—who but he is master now at Glendariff? He wasn't like a hound at Mister Halloran's heels for nothing."

"I wish I could put my heel on the murdering villain's neck! for, by my soul, I'd scorn to touch him with my hand," said Dennis, bitterly.

All this time, and it was not long, Nora was getting a meal together for the beggar-man, and the soldier from his post watched them narrowly.

"When you put that plate down beside me, a suillish mahuil agus machree,* take up the lock of hair I'll put down. It's his. Take it to Mrs. Halloran, and give it to her with his love, and tell her he's safe, and by this time is across the sea."

Nora did as she was directed, with great dexterity, and thrust it into her pocket just as Sergeant Hazel came into the kitchen, ostensibly for a drink of water, but in reality to see what was going on.

"An' now, you pittiogue," broke out Nora, "there's a dinner for a king; and if you're a good Christian you'll thank God for it. And you're welcome in His holy name. Could you stop a minit, sir?" she said to the sergeant. "I must run up and see what Mrs. Halloran wants: may-be it's a dish of tay, poor lady: she didn't ate a morsel to-day, by rayson of the headache that's racking her, laving the heart-ache out of the bargain; an' there's heaps of silver laying about on the dressers, spoons and the like, that it would be easy to slip in a wallet like this."

Dennis Byrne's honest, handsome face flushed crimson. He could pretend to be a fool, a rebel, and a wandering beggar; but, when it came to thief, he could scarcely hold

^{*} Light of my eyes and heart.

his peace. But he did, right manfully, and Nora, with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes, ran up to cheer Mrs. Halloran with the tidings she had to impart.

She was lying on her couch,—the same low couch that her husband had left her sleeping on, the night of his departure. She was very pale and still. She had shed but few tears, and exhibited scarcely any emotion. Father McCarthy had seen her every day; but even he could not rouse her from the passive heaviness of her grief. The delicate bloom had waned and faded entirely from her beautiful face, her eyes had grown larger and brighter, and her fingers were ever in motion, tapping on the back of a book, or writhing and twisting around each other, or tearing to shreds, scraps of paper and the flowers that little Gracie brought her every day. She never spoke unless some one addressed her, but lay, the live-long day, silent, prostrated, and hopeless. Whenever the little children came in and hung caressingly around her, she would kiss them gently and send them away; and the innocent ones, awed into silence by her strange mood, would slip away with noiseless steps, glad to go from the darkened room out into the air and sunshine.

"How are you feeling now, maire ban asthore,—my own dear loving lady?" said Nora, kneeling down beside her, and taking up the long, slender hand to caress.

"Well,—well enough," she said, without unclosing her eyes.

"I have news,-good news," whispered Nora.

Mrs. Halloran started up, and, pushing back the long curls from her face, gazed wildly at Nora, then, letting her hand fall heavily on the girl's shoulder, whispered, "Is it real, or am I dreaming? I have had so many dreams like this."

"It is no dream, asthore, but awake you are; and don't

for the world's sake cry out, for fear them that's on the watch will suspect us. Dennis Byrne's come back. He saw him: he is well, and is by this time over the say."

"Escaped! Alive! Well!" gasped Mrs. Halloran. "My God, I thank thee. But is there no message—no—"

"There is," said Nora, interrupting her while she took out the crisp, glossy curl of hair. "He sent this to you with his heart's love; an' that is all I know. We was watched all the time, an' it's all I could learn."

Mrs. Halloran laid the curl in the palm of her hand, and gazed fondly and dreamily on it, then pressed it to her lips, her forehead, her bosom. "Oh, John! my John! my husband!" she whispered; "my noble John!" Then a tear like a single, heavy rain-drop fell on the dark hair, where it lay like a gem.

"Yes," said Nora, who saw that tear, and hoped it was the harbinger of others; "for such a one as he to go wandering in a strange land,—may-be sick, and anywise lonesome an' homeless!"

"Oh, my husband! why cannot I be with you in poverty and exile?" Then tears began to flow more freely. "Where is he, Nora Brady?"

"I don't know, ma'am, only that Dennis Byrne seen him on Ballyhowry Mountain, where he came to hide."

"Hide! John Halloran, the noblest and best of God's creatures, skulking like a hunted beast!" cried Mrs. Halloran, while torrents of tears drenched her cheeks.

Nora was satisfied. "The tears will do you good, dear lady," she said, "and in a little while I will send poor Gracie and Desmond up. The childer's lost their smiles and color, and goes moping around like orphans."

"Yes, send them up,—poor little ones!" said Mrs. Halloran. "But one word, Nora: where is my cousin Donald?"

"Faith, ma'am, he's been away these four days. Mrs. Shea says he has gone to Dublin; anywise, it's a good riddance."

"He's safe—my husband! my heart's own love,—safe!" said Mrs. Halloran, clasping her hands together. "Angels of God guard and guide him! This news gives me life. I defy all now, and, trusting in the providence of my Father in heaven, I, His creature, will bear all in His holy name."

Ere long the sound of little feet outside and a timid knock on the door were heard. Mrs. Halloran went with feeble steps to open it, and found the two children standing, with a half-frightened look, on the threshold. She stooped and kissed them tenderly, and, folding the little soft hands in hers, led them to the couch, where, leaning against her pillows almost exhausted, she gathered them to her bosom in a long, tender embrace. Desmond was a noble child. He was now eight years old. were large and blue, his forehead bold and broad, surmounted by a coronal of short, crisp, curling hair. nose harmonized with his other features, while his mouth, without losing the sweetness of childhood, wore an expression of firmness and sweetness truly remarkable. Gracie was five summers old. Her brown hair was smoothly braided back from her round, childish forehead; her eyes were blue, and full of thought and gentleness, and her complexion very fair and pure. But there was a deep, tranquil thoughtfulness in the child's countenance, a tender grace and a calm repose in every movement, which had gained for her throughout the demesne the sobriquet of "Little Lady." Her father used to call her "Little Poet;" for not only would the fair and beautiful in nature call forth sweet responses from the child's soul, but her language often expressed the most exquisite

ideas. A bright star, a rainbow, a rich sunset, the singing of birds, the rustling of leaves, and the odor of flowers, were the quiet raptures of a life which was full of heaven.

Mrs. Halloran, while holding them in that warm embrace, spoke cheeringly to them, asked them a thousand questions, which dispelled their timidity and soon won them to smiles.

- "But, mother," said Desmond, "where is my father? And what are these grim, ugly soldiers doing at Glendariff? If I was a man, mother, I'd let them know what it was to stay where they were not wanted. Why does not father come home?"
- "He has gone a long journey, my boy. He has just sent his love to you; but you must tell no one."
- "Not tell that my father sent his love ?-Oh, mother !"
- "No, Desmond: you must not speak to any one except myself. Come always and talk to me about him."
 - "Would they kill him, if I did?"
- "They might. They are watching and waiting here for him, to put him in prison, because he loved his country too well; but he is safe and far away from them; but they must not know it yet."
- "Mother! That is the reason they called me a little rebel the other day," cried the boy, while indignant tears forced their way into his eyes.
- "Yes. Now you will be careful, for dear father's sake, both of you?"
 - "Yes, mother."
- "Yes, mamma," said soft-voiced little Gracie; "but I shall never, never see my papa again."
- "Child, do not say so," said Mrs. Halloran, holding her off, and looking eagerly and anxiously to see if there were any signs of illness in her face; but she could see none,

and, kissing her tenderly, she sent them away until evening. After that the child used to come every day to talk, in a low voice, about her father, asking a thousand questions, while her quivering lips and flushed cheeks betrayed how often her heart was full almost to agony.

Thus some weeks passed away, Dennis quite satisfied to be a prisoner of war at Glendariff, and Mrs. Halloran and Nora thankful to have him near them. The officers and soldiers were civil enough; and, except that they were rigorous in all that appertained to their duty, they certainly inflicted no gratuitous insults on the family. A message came to Mrs. Halloran one day, -Captain Saunders's compliments, and a request that she would meet him in the drawing-room on business. Agitated and excited, she scarcely knew why,-for she imagined that she had drained the cup of her bitterest sorrows in the separation from her husband,—she wrapped her shawl about her and went down. The rugged Scotchman arose and saluted her with blunt courtesy, and wheeled a large, softly cushioned chair nearer the fire for her use. He "hoped she was well."

"Thank you, I am quite well," she replied, courteously.

"Madam," he said, in his broad Scotch accent, which we leave to the imagination of the reader, "I hope—ahem—that what I have to say will not be quite unexpected. At any rate, it is painful; but you understand that I am vowed to military obedience and the like, and therefore am only the medium of those in authority."

"Does it concern my husband, sir?" she broke in. "If it does, for God's sake let me hear it, without a waste of words. Has Mr. Halloran fallen into the hands of the government?"

"I fear—that is—ahem—I believe not, madam. There is a rumor that he has escaped."

- "Thank God!" she ejaculated.
- "But his estate, madam,—you know that in these unfortunate cases estates are generally—"
 - "Confiscated, of course," she said, quietly.
- "But here is a letter, madam, for you. It came from Dublin with my official papers to-day, and will probably explain the thing more to your satisfaction than I could do." Mrs. Halloran tore open the letter, and read:—

"MY DEAR COUSIN:-

"The government, as a reward for services rendered, has been pleased to bestow on me a grant of the Glendariff estate. Do not, however, allow this to alter any of your plans, or cause you to leave until it is perfectly convenient. If I can serve you, command me.

"Your affectionate kinsman, Donald More."

- "I understand the matter fully, now, sir," she said, calmly, but deadly pale. "Mr. More is now the master of John Halloran's possessions."
 - "He is, madam."
- "I presume he has been engaged in the honorable occupation of discovering and denouncing from time to time those brave men who have proved how well they loved their country by sacrificing everything for it. He has, Judas-like, sold his honor, his kindred, his country, for gold; and, base as he is, England, still more base, rewards him with honors and possessions. In short, Donald More is an informer!" she said, with withering scorn.

Captain Saunders shrugged his shoulders, then handed her the official documents, which corroborated all that her kinsman had written. "Will you please to write, sir, and say that I shall leave Glendariff in two days?"

"Madam," said the officer, touched with profound respect for grief borne with such submissive dignity, "do not go. Make some arrangement with this man. He is your kinsman."

"Never, sir! No consideration, although I am next to houseless, would induce me to remain. There is a fragment of land on which stand a few scattered ruins, bequeathed to me by ancestors, which cannot be alienated, to which I shall retire. I thank you now for the consideration you have shown toward me and mine. A different person might have added much bitterness to my sorrows. Adieu!" said Mrs. Halloran, rising from the chair and retiring with dignity from the apartment. Here her courage failed her, and for a few moments a storm of indignation and grief shook her to the soul. When it passed away, she rang for Nora, then, opening her cabinet and bureau, she began to wrap her jewels and valuables in separate parcels.

"I am here, ma'am. Can I do anything for you?" said Nora, coming in. "But what in the world's name are you afther, Mrs. Halloran?"

"Nora, listen, my friend: we are to leave Glendariff; it is ours no longer."

"Sold, ma'am?" said Nora, choking back her tears.

"Sold! Yes. Sold for John Halloran's life; the purchase-money is paid in his exile and the ruin of his family. My cousin, Donald More, is now master of Glendariff," she said, bitterly.

"The black, murthering informer! May St. Patrick's curse rest on him!" cried Nora. "It's just what I thought he'd do, so I did. I knowed he was false-hearted to the core; and now he's robbed what's worse than the

widdy, for whin a woman lays her husband in a quiet grave, knowing his soul to be in the hands of a merciful God, she knows that what's done is right an' best, an' not like he was druv out into the wide world, without home or friends, in a strange land, laving his wife an' children disolate an' broken-hearted, with a traitor to the fore to rob an' rack-rent and prosecute his orphans. Ochone!" cried Nora, wringing her hands. "It's a hard trial, maire ban asthore, my darling, but there's a God above us, an' he hears me now," she said, snatching Mrs. Halloran's crucifix from the oratory, and holding it up toward heaven, "and the Blessed Virgin hears me say, on the cross of her dear Son, that I'll spend the rest of my life for them that's been all to me, nor think of me own until they come to their rights ag'in. Now rest aisy, Mary asthore: you're not frindless; and what Nora Brady says, that she'll do."

"Nora! Nora! Why did you do it?" exclaimed Mrs. Halloran. "I cannot permit it. Your life and happiness shall not be wasted because mine are. We have a home, —a poor one, it is true,—where, by the sale of my jewels, we can live. The old Abbey lands will shelter us and give us food. You shall come with me,—you and Dennis Byrne."

"Dennis Byrne! of course Dennis will stay there; he can farm and do the likes; but for me! I'm going to look for Mister Halloran the minit we hear he gets to Ameriky, an' work—work my fingers off till there's a home there ready to bring ye all together once more.—That's what I'm going to do; for Ireland's no longer a place for the Irish, an' you an' the childer shall not stay here like outcasts. When I do all I want to do, if I'm not too ould, an' Dennis Byrne does not change his mind, we'll go before the priest."

"Let us begin to get ready to leave Glendariff. Tell Dennis and Mrs. Shea——"

"Mrs. Shea, madam! Mrs. Shea will stay to keep house for the born villain that's coming," cried Nora. "Oh, it was beautiful, sure, to see what cronies they got to be, an' how polished she was with the sogers! Mrs. Shea, indeed!"

"Well! well!" said Mrs. Halloran, wearily; "let us prepare to go."

"Of course we must, ma'am. I wish it was to-night, since Glendariff's no longer in the family. My pride's up; an' if I only had Donald More here now, I'd make his hair rise on his head with the harangue I'd give him."

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CHAPTER VI.

Amening and the duroughest and

"I'm biddin' you a long farewell,

My Mary kind and true;

But I'll not forget you, darling,

In the land I'm going to.

They say there's bread and work for all,

And the sun shines always there;

But I'll not forget Cld Ireland,

Were it fifty times as fair."

The next day a police-constable, attended by four subordinate officials, made his appearance at Glendariff. "He had been sent down from Dublin," he informed Captain Saunders, "by Donald More, Esq., to protect the property, and see that nothing except Mrs. Halloran's personal effects were removed from the house."

"You've come on a braw errand," said Captain Saunders, with bitter irony, "an' one weel suited to such a hoodie craw. There na mickle to fear for yer thrapple, as there's only a desolate ladye and twa bairnies to spend your valor on. Yes, yes, your documents are all correct. You will have perfect indeemnity for any audacity you may commit; but, I rede ye, no insult to the ladye. None of us," and a burning spot glowed on the cheeks of the honest old Scotchman,—"none of us were sent here to interfere with her."

The brutal countenance of the man expressed merely a blank and passing look of amazement and annoyance. He evidently had not expected such a reception, and

could he have understood the meaning of that the old officer said, he would have sent up to Dublin no favorable report of his loyalty. As it was, the cool irony of his tone, and the uncourteous reception he gave him, stung him in such a manner that, had he been with his equals or his inferiors, he would have given vent to the rage which he now thought it most prudent to suppress.

"It's the law, captain; it's not ME, sir. It's the law. They might all go to the devil, sir, headlong, if the law'd let 'em, an' I'd not put a jack-straw in their way," he replied, sullenly. "But somebody must see this Mistress Halloran, and read these documents to her."

"Come with me," said the old soldier, rising from his chair, and striding through the hall toward the drawingroom, which he had seen Mrs. Halloran enter, with her children, a short time before. He tapped lightly on the door, which was opened by Desmond, who sprang back, and stood scowling at him, while the veins in his forehead swelled out, and his clinched fists were extended forward. Captain Saunders laid his large, brawny hand gently on the boy's head, and passed in. Mrs. Halloran arose, with her accustomed grace and courtesy, to receive him, although the appearance of a stranger with him evidently agitated her. She was every instant expecting news from her husband, and if this was the messenger who had come to tell her he was taken, she must die. So she thought; and Captain Saunders, who read her fears in her pale, anxious countenance, hastened to relieve them, by saying,-

"Do not be alarmed, madam. This gentleman, who is of the law, has only come down from Dublin on a mere legal formula, which, I believe, is usual on such occasions; and I, thinkin', perhaps, as you have—no, ahem—no

friend near ye, took the liberty of breaking the business to you."

"Thank you, from my soul, sir," replied Mrs. Halloran, with a grateful look, and inexpressibly relieved. "What is your business with me, sir?"

"I was sent down, ma'am, from Dublin, by Donald More, Esq."

"To drive me from the shelter of my own roof," she said, in a calm but bitter tone. "It were a needless precaution, however. I shall leave, as I intended, in the morning. It being his, even though unjustly, would be sufficient to drive me from it, if I had no other shelter than those ruins below us, or the fastnesses of the hills."

"Madam, this relates to the graith and effects belonging to yoursel'. Look over the in—the precious document: hand it to Mrs. Halloran, sir," said Captain Saunders.

"I don't know that it will be strictly accordin' to law, sir."

"It will. Mrs. Halloran, glance over it. It's nae a fletterin' document, I'll admit; but may-be the sooner it's ower the better," said Captain Saunders, passing the unfolded parchment from the constable's hands to hers.

Her eyes ran rapidly over it. A red spot was soon kindled on each pale cheek, her lips were firmly compressed, and he saw, by the fluttering of the lace on her bosom, how wildly her heart was throbbing, and knew how sharp and deep the blow had struck home. He pitied her. He thought of his own fair daughters in the quiet vale of Kinloch; and had he dared, could he have done it without disloyalty, he would have made her wrongs his own. After she had read it to the last word, she refolded the parchment, handed it back to the man, and, turning to Captain Saunders, said,—

"The treachery of friends and kinsmen is harder to bear than injuries received from strangers. My personal effects are not numerous, and, if my necessities were not so great, I would make Donald More a free gift of them, along with the rest I brought John Halloran, still the noblest and best of men, though now outlawed and called rebel, for that which, had it been successful, would have ranked him among the world's best heroes. I brought him but little, except my love and an undying trust in the purity of his character. That no tyranny can rob me of. Have no fears, therefore, for yourself and your employer. I shall give you a list of the effects belonging to me; he will know whether it is correct, and if I am entitled to them. When you receive his reply, they can be forwarded to me."

"But see here, madam; look at this clause. It will save you trouble, and me time," said the official. "Here: it reads, 'Mrs. Halloran knows what articles to remove, and will retain only such articles as she is entitled to by possession prior to her marriage with John Halloran."

"That is clear enough, madam; and, if an old soldier may advise you, take advantage of it, without giving yourself mair trouble."

"Thank you. That will do," she said, bowing to the police-constable. Then her face drooped down in her long, slender hand, and she was silent and lost in thought. The official left the drawing-room, and the closing door roused her. "Pardon me," she said to the old officer, who had been regarding her with deep interest; "these things come on me like tempests to an uncaged bird. I have had but few cares, and but little to think of except my own happiness, since my marriage with John Halloran. But there is one question I must ask, Captain Saunders. I presume, sir, on your goodness and unexpected friendship, to beg you, as a last favor, to tell me

if any news has come of the—of—John Halloran, my husband."

"Madam, I do not know," said Captain Saunders, speaking with the broad accent which made his phrase-ology almost unintelligible whenever he was excited by any unusual emotion, "that what I have to tell will involve any principle of duty, under existing circumstances. Rumor has made public all I know, and, as our plans are all frustrated regarding him, it will do no harm for you to know that he is either in France or on his way to America."

"Thank God!" she exclaimed, fervently; "thank God! Oh, sir, if you knew John Halloran, you would not grudge him his liberty."

"Madam, whatever I may feel for you, I have no sympathy with rebels," outspoke the Scotchman.

"That's what he called me! that's what he called me, mamma! How dare you call my father a rebel, you base English soldier? He's a thousand times better than you are; and if he was here, he'd thrash you away from Glendariff," most unexpectedly shouted Desmond.

"Desmond, my boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Halloran, drawing him, flushed and struggling, to her bosom.

"You are a bold little rebel," said Captain Saunders, laughing, and trying to lay his hand on the brown, curly head, which still lifted itself defiantly toward him. "It would be safe to get you out of the country, before you begin to give our gracious queen trouble. Madam, I must leave you. I wish you well; and if my presence at Glendariff has in any way inconvenienced or distressed you, I hope that the fact of its being involuntary on my part will excuse me."

Mrs. Halloran frankly held out her hand, saying, "I only thank the kind Providence that led you hither. You

have been a friend and protector in these sore trials. Had another person been sent to Glendariff, my misery might have been aggravated. But I must say farewell. In the morning I shall leave this place forever."

It did not require much time and labor to select and pack the effects Mary Halloran intended to have removed to Fada-Brae Abbey. Some antique pieces of furniture, beds, and household linen, a few odd old silver vessels of the time of Cormac, her husband's portrait, and three or four copper utensils for kitchen use, all of which had belonged to her mother, or herself, before her marriage, and most of which had descended through many generations to her possession, she took. Her jewels and rich clothing, which she never expected to adorn-herself with again, she reserved for such contingencies as poverty might disclose, to turn, as occasion might require, into the available means of living. The rest, those rich and beautiful things which the exquisite and elegant taste of John Halloran had gathered around her, and which were, every one, consecrated by some cherished association, she left, or rather abandoned, because in the ruined place she was going to she knew there was scarcely a habitable room, and that everything superfluous would embarrass and inconvenience her. "He will scarcely sell or send them away," she thought, as she wandered through the house that night, lingering beside each precious memento of brighter days: "here they are safe, and I shall love to come in fancy, and people these rooms again with the familiar faces which have always been here, and think of everything being as he left it and as I saw it last."

Mrs. Shea, as Nora had predicted, remained at Glendariff, and it was difficult to discover whether it was from motives of self-interest or really, as she said, "to kape her eyes on her master's property, that that thief of

the world, Donald Dhu, had got his clutch on, but wouldn't hould it long, if dhrames was to be believed. So cheer up, Mistress Halloran, honey, an' don't let a could thought of me come into yer gintle heart. God knows, I'd rayther go; but if I do, who'll take care of yer own till ye come back again?"

Mrs. Shea wept abundantly, and exhibited the most genuine emotions of grief, which were quite satisfactory to all except Nora Brady, who said nothing, but looked sideways, and turned the end of her pretty retroussé nose a little more toward the zenith than nature intended. The baccah man, with his snuff-colored wig and ragged garments, had suddenly disappeared; and when the cars came up from Kildare to take Mrs. Halloran's effects to the distant glen of Agerlow, one of them was driven by a stout, handsome young fellow, whom Nora called "Cousin Dennis," and who was recognized by Captain Saunders's orderly as the blacksmith who had shod his horse a few weeks before.

It is no wonder they did not recognize him as the lame beggar who had been limping so many days about Glendariff, whose barbarous phraseology and idiotic speeches made them entirely unsuspicious of his being any other than just what he appeared, a harmless simpleton. It would be impossible to convey in mere words the bitter anguish that surged through Mary Halloran's soul when she saw the last glimpse of her home. It had been her Eden, but now, driven by inexorable circumstances beyond its gates, the world appeared to her, as it had done to our common mother, Eve, ages ago, when, driven from Paradise, she went forth to a pilgrimage of bitterness and tears. In that hour of farewell, in that little space of time, more earth-ties were broken and torn asunder than sometimes happen in a long lifetime.

The weight of years had seemed to fall suddenly on her, and the world stood revealed in its bare mockery to her gaze. Human hopes had been dashed like frail crystal vases to the earth, and broken; human joys had sung their brief summer song, and fled. And it is well, O merciful God, when the bleak tempests of life tear away from this mortal existence its illusory charms; for even when the shadow is darkest, when we falter and stumble in the gloom, we can see, through the clouds above us, glimpses of that light which never fades, and which is Hope's beacon, smiling and luring us to the land of eternal repose.

She said but little as they journeyed along. The struggle was a silent and bitter one; but gradually the recollection of a merciful and overruling Providence, the tender love of the Holy Virgin, and thoughts of these sorrows being, like life, transitory, soothed her mind. Then came back the memory of her little ones, and the devotion of Nora, to cheer her. These were deathless: such love and such principles flowed only from God, and she felt that, even in her desolation, there were rills of gladness, and a staff on which her weakness might lean, which would blossom like the prophet's rod. And the mourner lifted up her head, not rejoicing, but peaceful, and resigned to the will of her Father in heaven.

Situated on a beautiful and picturesque hill-side which overhung the glen of Agerlow, the ruins of the old feudal castle and abbey of Fada-Brae presented an imposing spectacle from a distance. Had it been on the Rhine, painters, tourists, and poets would have immortalized it; but here it was scarcely known beyond the obscurity of the valley it overlooked, and the sketch-books of a few antiquarians who had visited it more by chance than intention. And yet its architectural beauties, some of

which remained intact, were wonderful, and vindicated eloquently the civilization and perfection of science in the early ages of Ireland. There were the graceful arches, the crusted marbles, the stupendous buttresses, the fantastic gargoyles, the stained glass, which are only imitated in this our day, the splendid architrave, the massive pillars, the groined roof, the rich sculpture,-which time had mildewed, but not erased,-had broken and made ruins of, but not destroyed the fragments, each one of which told a proud tale of other days. And now to the ruined halls of their ancestors the last descendants of the princely McCarthy Mores had come, seeking refuge and shelter. The fox had made his hole, and the cony his burrow, and the owl her nest, in the long-deserted ruins. There was scarcely a portion of them sheltered from the weather. But in the old cloisters, once the holy retreat of saintly men, some small apartments were discovered by Nora and Dennis, which in a short time were rendered habitable, and in a few days Mrs. Halloran was comfortably situated, and things around her began to wear a home-like and pleasant aspect. Dennis exchanged some old silver for a cow and a few necessary farming-implements, while Nora, after attending to Mrs. Halloran's comfort, arranged her kitchen with the same faultless neatness that had always reigned in the one at Glendariff, and privately instructed Ellen, the children's nurse, in the mystery of cooking and getting up linen. As Nora was beginning to prepare for her flight beyond the sea in her search after John Halloran, she was impatient, in the single devotion of her honest heart, to commence her toils in the far-off land she was going to, for which she would receive gold that would purchase comforts, and perhaps a home, for those she loved. One day Dennis Byrne came up from the market

town with a letter for Mrs. Halloran. It was a thick, heavy letter, but the direction was in Father McCarthy's handwriting. Nora saw that, but, filled with a strange hope, she laid down her work and ran in with it to Mrs. Halloran, who tore off the envelope, and found within a note from Father McCarthy, and a letter from her husband. With a cry of joy, she opened and read it. It was from Boston. He had arrived there in safety, and, except that he was fatigued with the voyage, he was well, and expected to obtain employment, which would enable him to provide a home, in the land of his exile, for his family; but his movements were undecided, and he besought her to remain in quiet and hope until she heard from him again. And then followed an account of his adventures after Dennis Byrne had left him on Ballyhowry Mountain; how, in the disguise of an old woman, he had got on board the smuggler's craft, and had narrowly escaped an English cruiser in the Channel, and been almost shipwrecked on the coast of France, after which his progress was comparatively unobstructed by dangers or delays until he reached in safety the shores of America. Then came a thousand expressions of endearment and anxious solicitude; questions, and words of undying love, and messages of affection to all, especially to his "little dove" Gracie, whom, he said, he would give all the world just to fold one moment to his bosom. He thought of Desmond, he said, as of a young eaglet, who would protect the nestlings at home, who would be a brave, good boy until his father came back. He was ever before him, with his flashing eyes and proud bearing, and it comforted him to know that the boy had in him all the elements of strength necessary to the formation of a great and good character. Nora and Dennis were named with affection, and many were the

grateful messages that came to them; then followed words of cheer and full of hope. John Halloran was throughout the letter. His goodness, his nobleness of soul, his kind thoughts for all, were perceptible in every word, until the family at Fada-Brae thought almost that he had been in their midst.

Father McCarthy's note informed Mrs. Halloran of his increasing infirmities, and of a bad cold, which had confined him to his bed. Her sorrows weighed heavily on him in his old age, but he trusted the letter he sent her would cheer and comfort her. As soon as he could get about, she would see him; and any letters she might wish to send to her husband she could inclose to him.

That night, as Mrs. Halloran was sitting alone by her sleeping children, Nora came in quietly, and said she would like to speak to her, if it would not interrupt her. Since the change in Mrs. Halloran's fortunes, instead of behaving with greater familiarity, Nora had treated her with almost scrupulous ceremony, and had impressed it on the minds of Dennis and Ellen that they must never show, by word, or look, or act, their consciousness of the downfall of the family, but must make up by their respect what was wanting in the rest of the world toward her.

"To be sure, Nora dear," replied Mrs. Halloran. "Come in. I feel almost happy to-night. Oh, Nora, God has been very good to me," said she, holding out her hand, while her eyes filled with tears. Nora took the hand and folded it to her bosom, then kissed it, and laid it tenderly down where it was resting when she came in.

"Sit down, dear Nora; sit here, and tell me all you have to say."

"This will do, suillish machree," she said, kneeling beside Mrs. Halloran, and laying her hand on hers. "I feel easier so; for I can look right into the face of you."

"Well, as you please. Yours is like sunshine to me, Nora, always. But what is the matter?—what do you wish?" said Mary Halloran, smoothing her hand over the glossy black braids on Nora's forehead.

"Well, alanna! I'm thinking, now, that, if you can spare me, I'd better go."

"Go! Nora Brady! Would you leave me?" exclaimed Mrs. Halloran.

"Let me tell you, mavourneen, how it is. It's not for myself or my own interests that I'd be goin', but then as Misther Halloran is gone over the seas to Amerikey, an' they say, he can never come back again, and as the fine ould property's gone out of the family, and although this is a grand and ancient place, it is poor, and will not support the wants of a lady and two childer, that are highborn like yersel', I thought, as I'm young an' strong, I'd better cross over to Amerikey too, and airn enough to bring you there, where, please God, we'll all be together once more; an' if we never see Ould Ireland again, we can be true to her in our hearts, and pray for them that's left in it." Here tears gathered and flashed in Nora's fine black eyes, while Mrs. Halloran, comprehending at once all her unselfish devotion, fell forward on her neck weeping

"How can I spare you, Nora? Yet how to refuse you I cannot tell," at last said Mrs. Halloran.

"Spare me, madam! Why, there's Ellen I've been drilling an' taching until she bates myself out entirely, and a faithful, good, quite girl she is, and handy at everything; an' Dennis—why, Dennis can do anything he sets his hands to, sure, an' willing enough he is now for me to go. Then, madam, there's Misther Halloran, he might want some better friend by him than strangers if he's sick or in trouble, an' I know I could do many a thing for him, if so be he hasn't got a start yet—God save him."

Mary Halloran was silent and thoughtful. Nora's last argument had almost persuaded her. Still, she felt so dependent on her, and had been so accustomed to seeing her about her, that, in view of the great uncertainty of the success of her plan, she could not at once consent to it.

"America is a country of great extent, Nora. Suppose my husband should have left Boston: you'd find yourself in a strange country, friendless and unprotected," she suggested.

"Surely, ma'am, you ought to know by this time that I've a tongue in my head and wits sharp enough to find him," said Nora, quickly.

"But it takes money!"

"Troth an' I know that; an' it's enough I've got to take me there, an' a little over," she said.

"Nora, dear, you undertake a great deal. Do not let your affection for me and mine mislead you. I confess, it would comfort me to know that you were near my husband; but to send you forth into the wide, cold world—across the perilous ocean—away from the shelter of my home, and from one who loves the earth you tread on,—I cannot do it, Nora, even for John Halloran's sake."

"Then, ma'am, I must go without your consent, because I know, an' God knows, that it will be well in the end. I am ready to go away in the morning."

"Oh, Nora! oh, Nora Brady! can I ever requite your love?" said Mrs. Halloran, in a broken voice. "Since you will, may Heaven bless you; may good angels guide and guard you. Go, and should you find my husband, give my heart's best love to him. But I must write; there are some jewels I must send him to purchase comforts with. Oh that I might go with you!"

That day week, Nora Brady was on her way, in the fine packet-ship "Fidelia," to Boston.

CHAPTER VII.

"Her heart with love teeming, her eyes with smiles beaming, What mortal could injure a blossom so rare?

Oh, Nora—dear Nora—the pride of Kildare!"

Notwithstanding Nora's noble purpose,—the principle of right which governed her, and the strong will which animated her impulses and actions, - notwithstanding the bright and almost romantic hopes which had impelled her to brave the perils of the deep and unknown trials in a strange land, there were times when her heart almost failed her,-when memory led her back to the sweet glen and the sunny braes of Agerlow, to deserted Glendariff, and the fond hearts she had left behind her, and tears fell fast and warm. At such times a decade of her rosary was her best comfort; her next was to go among the poor emigrants who crowded the steerage of the "Fidelia," many of whom were old and white-haired, to whom it had been a grievous trial to leave the sod where their fathers slept in hope, to go away to die and be laid among strangers. There were little children, also, who were sick and pining for fresh air and nutritious food, to whom the pent-up atmosphere of the steerage was a slow poison, and the undulating motion of the ship incomprehensible and terrifying: Nora Brady was not one to stand idle in such scenes as these wasting time and energies over the inevitable past and in vague fears for the future. Her stores were abundant, and, had they been

less so, she would have shared them with those who needed aid. In the effort to cheer and strengthen others, she often scattered the clouds which were gathering over her own heart, and filled it with sunshine. She inspired the desponding with courage; she brought smiles to the countenances of the old emigrants by singing the sweet, merry songs of "home" to them. Her busy hands were never idle. She cleansed the sleeping-places of the sick, and prepared food for those who were unable to prepare it for themselves. The little ones hailed her coming with outstretched hands or clamorous shouts; and in all that band of poor, heart-weary exiles there was not one whom Nora Brady had not, in some way, served. And yet, if any one had told her that her conduct was extraordinary, that she was performing great and meritorious acts, she would have wondered how the performance of apparent duties deserved remark or eulogy. God had endowed this noble creature with the best instincts of humanity, which, nurtured by a living faith, made her what she was. Yet Nora was not a saint. Nora was not highly educated. She was ignorant of all those accomplishments so valued by the world: yet was Nora a true heroine.

One afternoon a sad, listless feeling came over her, and, stealing away from the group which surrounded her, she sought a retired and sheltered part of the deck; and, seating herself on a coil of rope, she looked wistfully back, through her tears, toward her own beautiful isle,—the land of her birth and love. The sun was setting, and far and near, over the crisp waves, shed a glory of crimson and gold. In the silent and far distance a few white sails were hovering like sea-birds, while all around the horizon, wherever she turned her eyes, the heavens seemed bowed to the verge of the mighty sea. All else of the world, except those broad, rolling billows, seemed

curtained away from her sight forever. The solemn and glorious deep above her, the restless and fathomless sea beneath her, the wall of sunlit cloud and dim shadows around her, it is not strange that an inexpressible feeling of awe possessed her.

"Holy Mother," thought Nora, "perhaps we've lost the way. How can it be that we can ever find a country beyond there, where the sky itsel' is hangin' down like a great wall? But surely I'm losin' the wits I was born with. The same curtain is between me an' the dear ould land I left, and I cannot see it, though I know it is there. An'so I reckon it is with heaven,-oh, I know it. We cannot see it, but we know it's up there beyond our sight; that many stand on its bright shore to wait and watch for our comin' to welcome us to our home. Heaven is a beautiful thought! This life's a dim, stormy sea at best, an' it's a pleasant thing to know there's a happy lan' beyond, where tears will be wiped from our eyes forever." Then the rosary was slipped out, and a decade dropped for a happy death, after which she returned to the group she had left with a cheerful countenance and lighter heart.

A stress of rough weather occurred, which continued some days, and the hearts of the bravest of those poor landsmen grew timid and fearful amidst the terrors of the deep. The tossing of the ship, the straining of cordage, the wild shrieks of the wind, kept them in fear of instant death while the storm continued. Nora needed comfort now, for she was deadly sick and terrified beyond measure,—not at the fear of death, but at the unearthly uproar and frightful sounds which surrounded the ship. But at last the tempest lulled, the clouds drifted away in huge masses, the wild surges, weary of their own fury, grew calmer and more gentle, and at last the sun burst forth in all his splendor, and, like an Eastern king throwing his

jeweled robe over a rebellious chieftain, in token of forgiveness for some dark revolt, now spread a mantle of sparkling gold far and wide over the waves. Nora, pale and weak, crept from her berth, and, throwing her cloak about her, slipped away from the others, and, seeking her old place on deck, sat down to think of home, and have a good cry to herself. A fear was on her heart that she should never again see those she loved; that her search for Mr. Halloran would prove fruitless; that perhaps she would sicken and die in the strange land she was going to. The inadequacy of her resources to cope with the difficulties which lay in her way, now, for the first time, presented itself. She could not see the hand which led her, or penetrate the dim mist of the future, any more than she could see beyond the horizon; and, feeling discouraged and out of heart, she thought the best thing for her to do, if Mr. Halloran was not in Boston, would be to return home in the "Fidelia."

Just then Nora was startled by a wild and agonized shriek, and, rushing forward, saw a woman standing on the deck, with her eyes and arms uplifted, almost frantic with terror. Several of the sailors ran to the spot, and those of the emigrants who were on deck hastily joined the group. Looking up, she saw a boy, some eight years old, clinging to the main-mast, above the last cross-tree. To that dizzy height he had clambered, until now, in attempting to return, he grew sick and giddy, and looked down with a wild and frightened countenance. There was a clamor and shouting from the crowd below, which bewildered and frightened the child still more, who every moment grew whiter and weaker. Suddenly the captain of the ship appeared among the excited people. He saw at a glance what was the matter, and, commanding instant silence, inquired to whom the boy belonged, and what was his name.

"He is mine, sir, an' we calls him Patsy," said the poor mother, wringing her hands.

"Don't look down, Patsy; look up," shouted the captain; "hold tight and look aloft. Don't look down again, but feel your way with your feet. That's right. Look up, and tell me how many stars you see through the sunshine. That's it. Look aloft—look aloft, you young monkey, for your life!"

And so, cheering him and watching his perilous descent, keeping his keen eye fixed on every movement, the captain stood brave and hopeful, while the silence and suspense of those around him were so deep and intense that the very shifting of the child's hands and feet on the ropes could be distinctly heard. Lower and lower glanced the bare feet among the black and weather-stained cordage, while the boy's hands, strained and bleeding, clung like the talons of a bird to the tarred ropes, until he was just over their heads, or perhaps a fathom higher.

"Fetch me some brandy and water and a rope-end," said the captain to his steward.

They were brought immediately, and by this time the ambitious Patsy was almost on deck. His mother was rushing forward, when the captain told her kindly to stand aside for a moment. He grasped the unfortunate Patsy by his shoulder, and, after making him swallow a few mouthfuls of brandy, laid the rope-end over him seven or eight times, while the boy capered and danced like something frantic.

"Now, Patsy, my dear, your circulation is restored, and you can go to your mother. I don't think you'll attempt shortly to clamber up to the ship's sky-scraper, my lad,—a place that no old sailor likes to go to unless there's a dead calm."

Laughter and tears and congratulations mingled to-

gether over the still frightened child, who, from that moment, became the darling of every sailor on board, and who, by the time the ship reached Boston, was as expert and agile in climbing and going aloft as a monkey.

This incident brought Nora's smiles back. It had been a good thing for her, those warning words, "Look aloft; if you look down you'll fall." She determined from that hour to "look up" always; no matter how great the danger and how dreary the storm, to "look aloft." And when the incorrigible Patsy told her "how dizzy and sick he had felt on the main-mast, and how his fingers were just slipping from their hold when the captain shouted to him to look up, and how, as soon as he did look up, he felt strong and steady," she understood more fully the necessity there was for evermore looking up.

At last the "Fidelia" was safely moored at her dock in Boston harbor, and Nora felt truly that she was a stranger in a strange land. Friends were waiting on the pier for many on board. The poorest emigrants had a welcome from kinsmen who had sent out for them and now waited to receive them; but, in all the crowd, no one thought of her; no eye met hers with a smile and tear; no rough, honest hand grasped hers and bade her welcome. In all those ten thousand dwellings no hearth-stone held a warm place for Nora. Not in all that city, or in all the broad land, was there greeting or welcome for the stranger. It was hard to bear; but Nora looked up, and was comforted. Her chest and other things were gathered around her. The steward, who was a countryman of her own, knew of some respectable people, friends of his, who took boarders, to whose house he would conduct her as soon as he put himself in shore trim.

Thomas McGinnis and his wife received her most kindly, and she felt at once that she had found friends.

With a few boarders, a small grocery, and two cows, they not only lived comfortably, but had saved money and purchased property, affording another proof that, with equal opportunities, the Irish are as thrifty as any people under the sun. Nora soon inquired if Thomas McGinnis had heard of Mr. Halloran. That was the burden of her heart; and if "she could get a single trace of him, she should feel that her efforts in behalf of those she loved at home were not to be unavailing." So she said after she had told the good man and his wife her story, or as much of it as it was necessary for them to know. But no one there had heard of him, although, as Mr. McGinnis remarked, "he might be there fifty times and he none the wiser. But I know of a place, Miss Brady," he said, "where you'd be likely to hear something of the gentleman you're seekin'."

"An' where is that, sir?" asked Nora, leaning forward, and speaking earnestly.

"Why, bedad, it's at the 'Pilot' Office, where they get news from every part of the known world, especially from the old land at home. There's nothing worth knowing turns up, miss, that you don't see in the 'Pilot;' and Mr. Donahoe's a man that's not ashamed of his country or his religion, but stands up boldly for the interests of both; and as for Mr. Halloran, if he's been to Boston, he'll be sure to know it. Our boy Willie's learnin' the art of printin' at the 'Pilot' Office, and it 'ud be right handy for you to go and ask a few questions yourself."

"When can I go?" asked Nora, full of hope.

"To-morrow, when Willie goes to work," replied honest Thomas McGinnis.

"And it'll be a good time, Miss Brady, dear, to be inquiring for the situation you was speaking of," added his wife. "Many's the poor girl Mr. Donahoe's befriended

in that way. He's got the warm side left for his countrymen, sure, an' never thinks of trouble when he can do 'em a good turn."

With a light heart, Nora, neatly and becomingly attired, accompanied Willie McGinnis to his place of business. When they arrived there, the town-clock struck, and the boy, finding himself a half-hour behind the time, ushered her into the handsome and spacious book-store of the "Pilot" Buildings, and ran with all the speed he could to the printing-room. Nora felt abashed and embarrassed at being so suddenly left to depend on her own resources, and stood half frightened and undetermined whether to stay or go away and beg the favor of Mr. McGinnis or his wife to come with her on the morrow. A number of persons were passing in and out, and the clerks were occupied in packing books to be sent away, or waiting on customers. At last one of the clerks observed her, and asked her, politely, what she would have.

"I am waiting to see Mr. Donahoe, sir," she said, modestly.

"He is not in at present," replied the gentleman. "He is in another part of the building, very busy with workmen who are putting up a new steam-power press. Can you wait a little while?"

"If you please, sir."

"Sit down, then, and I'll tell him when he comes in," said the clerk, as he hurried away to attend to his duties. Nora thanked him, and sat down; but one hour passed, two, three; it was nearly twelve o'clock, and she still waited. Every one who came in, she thought, must certainly be the publisher; but, disappointed, she would watch them transact some light business, look over the elegantly-bound books, make purchases, and—go away. Fairly

disheartened, she felt that a good fit of crying would do her more good than anything else. She did not know the way home, or she would have gone away. No one seemed to observe her, or at least no one spoke to her, and she had just formed the desperate resolution to address one of the clerks, when a quick, friendly voice near her said, "Do you wish to see any one, my good girl?"

"I have been waiting to see Mr. Donahoe," she said, rising.

"I am he. What do you want?"

Nora, like most of her sex, was a physiognomist, and it only required a glance at the friendly face before her, to feel reassured.

"I am very busy, and in a great hurry," he replied; "but tell me your business."

And Nora Brady told her story. With tears in her eyes which she could not keep back, and a low voice, whose sweetness was enriched by the slight brogue of her speech, she opened her heart. The active, busy publisher, who even in Yankee-land is noted for his energy and enterprise, was at first restless, and looked at his watch; then he leaned forward and listened with deeper attention; but when she mentioned the name of John Halloran he drew a chair beside her and sat down, folding his arms, while the most eager interest was depicted on his countenance. At last she brought her narrative to a close, by asking her hearer "if he knew Mr. Halloran, or had heard of his being in Boston."

"You're a good girl, Nora Brady," said the publisher.

"Of course I know John Halloran, and have seen him too.

He is my friend. He was my guest."

"Oh, then, sir, may God bless you for that word! I've got many things to tell him in regard to them he's left behind him, and some jewels Mrs. Halloran sent him, in

case his money give out," exclaimed Nora, clasping her hands together. "And where is he now, your honor?"

"I fear I cannot tell you that. Mr. Halloran left Boston two weeks ago. He went to New York and remained there a few days, then left for the South."

Poor Nora! What a sudden darkness came over her faithful heart just at the very instant that she thought all was brightest! Gone! Wandering! And she here with messages from home for him, and means to aid him. "Why," thought Nora,—full of rebellion to this trial, but only for a moment,—"why could not God, who knows all things, keep him here?"

"Because, Nora, God designed to bring light out of darkness. It is His way. He brings up the precious ore of holy virtues from the depths of the human heart with hard blows. The gems most precious to Him are those which are cleansed with tears. His ways are past finding out, Nora Brady; but they are all right: so look up, and be comforted."

Thus whispered her guardian angel, who loved well the humble and pure-minded one he was commissioned to guard and guide.

"Don't be distressed," said the publisher, after a moment's thought; "I will put a line in the 'Pilot' next week, informing Mr. Halloran that letters have arrived for him at this office. You must send me the letters. If he sees the notice, we shall soon get some tidings of him. You're a good girl, Nora; and if I can serve you I will."

"The Blessed Virgin have care of your soul, sir, and a thousand thanks for your kindness to a stranger, but I should like to get a situation."

"What can you do?"

"I can turn my hand to anything, sir," she said, quietly; but at home I mostly cooked, an' got up linen."

"Very well. Persons very frequently come here to inquire about help, and I will keep you in mind. you had better go. But where did you say you stopped?"

"With Willie McGinnis's mother, sir; the boy that's

at work here."

"Do you know the way home?"

"I'm afraid not, sir: it's a long way."

"Stephen, send Willie McGinnis here," said the publisher to a porter who was passing by at the moment. "Here, lad," he continued, when the boy, flushed and expectant, came in; "go home with this young woman to show her the way, then make a holiday for yourself the rest of the day."

Every morning Nora hoped that before night she should hear something from the "Pilot" Office. She listened with strained and anxious ears, as evening closed in, for Willie's footsteps; but day after day passed, and no message came, and she began to think she was forgotten. She was sitting silent and sad one evening in Mrs. McGinnis's snug little parlor, when Willie ran in, and, throwing a slip of paper in her lap, hurried back to his supper. She turned it toward the firelight, and read, "Nora Brady will hear of a respectable situation by applying at Mrs. Sydney's, No. 62 Washington Place. No news of Mr. Halloran"

"I dare not write home an' tell that," thought Nora, with a sigh. "No news from Mr. Halloran! Oh, my Blessed Mother! for the sake of that broken-hearted mother, an' the little ones belongin' to her, help me in this strait."

Nora, guided by Mrs. McGinnis, who had to pass the place on her way to market, went to Mrs. Sydney's as directed. It was a large, handsomely constructed house, but wore a look of faded gentility which impressed every one with the idea that its inmates had known better days.

Mrs. Sydney sent for Nora to come into her sitting-room, and received her kindly but with a scrutinizing glance. The lady herself was old, and had a care-worn expression of countenance, and she was dressed in mourning which had once been handsome, but was now rusty. Everything was scrupulously clean and tidy everywhere.

"I suppose you bring recommendations?"

"Here is one, ma'am, from the only place I ever lived at," replied Nora, handing her Mrs. Halloran's recommendation.

"Really, this speaks well for you, young woman," said the old lady, looking up with a pleasant smile. "I should like to engage you; but before I do I must give you to understand fully how you will be situated. Sit down there and listen. In the first place, I have a negro cook, who will keep you in hot water; besides which, I am compelled to take a few boarders, for I am not rich, and you would have to accommodate yourself to their humors."

"I will endeavor to do right, ma'am; an' if, after doin' my part, it don't suit, I can go away," said Nora, half terrified at the prospect.

"Of course you're a Papist?"

"A what, ma'am?" asked Nora, amazed, for she had never heard the word before.

"A Romanist—a Catholic?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am, a Catholic surely," she replied, earnestly.

"Well, no need to be riled. We're all su'thing or other, and it's right, I guess. I'm a Universalist, but never take it on myself to promulge my doctrines to them that holds others. Only I've had helps that called themselves Catholics, and said they confessed to the priest, and went to mass, and all that, when, come to find out, they didn't

go at all, but shindied round here and there, visiting and frolicking, and neglecting my work; and I've come to this p'int, that there's nothing worse in natur' than a bad Catholic. They're a disgrace to their religion, and give them that's outside a mighty poor opinion of it, too."

Nora listened with surprise and mortification, but said nothing.

"Now, I want you to tell me honestly, do you go to confession?—do you go to your duties regular? for, you see, if I've had bad ones, I've had good ones too, and I know the difference."

"It would seem like praisin' myself, ma'am, and, faith, I never had such questions put to me before, because there was no need," replied Nora, with a bewildered look; "but surely there's no power in the world could make me neglect my religion."

"I hope not. It can't be a religion that's worth much, to be neglected and scandalized by them that belongs to it. But, anyways, I want to tell you, if you are a good faithful girl, you may go to confession every week, and fast whenever you like, and go to mass on Sundays, and say your beads, and pray to images, if it does you any good, whenever you choose——"

"I only go to confession once a month, ma'am, and never pray to images at all," interrupted Nora, quickly, while a merry smile dawned on her face, in spite of her efforts to control it.

"La suz! Not pray to images! Well, it's none of my business if you did. But there's another bother in your way. One of my lodgers is a very odd-tempered old bachelor,—very rich and as stingy,—my!—He'll be forever quarreling about his wood, and be in a snarl about his candle-ends, and scraps of paper. I can promise you skrimmages enough with him, Nora, my girl."

"And then, ma'am, he may have his skrimmagin' to hisself entirely, for I'd scorn to waste or rack what didn't belong to me. Is that all, ma'am?"

"No. I keep only two helps,—Phillis and a white help; and there's work enough to be done. She does the cooking and washing, and the other cleans house and irons. I give her eight dollars per month; the other gets the same. Now, what say you?"

"I can only try it, ma'am. I don't mind work. I've been used to it all my life. I suppose I should find trials everywhere and in every situation: so, if you please, I'll come in the morning, if that'll suit."

"In the morning, of course. Be here by six o'clock. I think we shall get on; for, Nora, you look as if I shall be able to respect you. Your dress, so plain and neat, everything so clean and tidy about you and suitable to a young woman who has to earn her living, makes me think you have a great deal of self-respect; and it's a good thing for everybody to have."

In her new home, Nora Brady found that Mrs. Sydney had not exaggerated the difficulties of the situation. In the first place, Mrs. Sydney herself was in a continual fuss about Nora's religious practices, and her going to confession, so that really, if she had been a bad Catholic, she could scarcely have fared worse. Mrs. Sydney knew that her interest depended considerably on Nora's religious sincerity and steady morals, and she determined that she should not lapse into indifference through her neglect. It is the fashion of that region to have an "eye to the main chance" in every particular and phase of life, and Mrs. Sydney was like the rest: therefore she cherished genuine piety in her help, after her own ideas. Then Mrs. Sydney was dreadfully afraid of her black cook, Phillis, and would have inspired Nora with the

same terror, only Nora soon discovered that Phillis, with the keen instincts of her class, knew very well who to show her airs to and who not. She was one of the rescued-from-bondage ones, and had been made quite a heroine of, when she first arrived at Boston, by the "Equal Rights and Southern Transportation Company," which not only tickled her vanity and self-love, but inspired her with an idea that her friends, after all, were only poor white folks, to put themselves down so with niggers; so she ate and drank at their expense, let them show her off, and dress her, while she laughed in her sleeve, and was not much astonished to find herself suddenly dropped when their ends were accomplished. had been in Mrs. Sydney's kitchen ever since, and presumed no little on having heard it said so often that "all races were equal," and the black man as good as the white. The insolence of the coarse and ignorant black woman, who regarded Nora with no favor, because she saw at once how widely they differed, was a sore trial; but after the high-spirited Irish girl had thrown out a few flashes from her handsome black eyes, and told her, in a quiet but very firm way, not to interfere with her, and had on several occasions helped her through no slight difficulties in cooking, she behaved somewhat better. Nora did not waste; and Phillis did. was neat and tidy; Phillis was slovenly and careless. Nora was even-tempered and cheerful; Phillis was like a volcano. Nora was close to the interests of her employer; Phillis was wasteful and extravagant. between two beings so adverse in race, color, and morals there could be no harmony or comfort. But Phillis could find no grounds of complaint against Nora, and was annoyed and angry to discover that she felt, in spite of herself, a degree of respect for her which she had not felt

for any white person before, since she left "Ole Vir-Then came the old lodger,—one of the merchant princes of Boston,-who snarled and scolded if his candles and fire were lit in good time, and stormed and swore if they were not,-who split and counted out his own wood, and measured the waste of his candles by sticking pins at regular distances in the one he used. Nora had many a hearty cry to herself, but she had too much self-respect to rebel against Mrs. Sydney's arrangements or authority, to quarrel with one so much her inferior as the cook, or dispute with Mr. Mallow about the disposal of his own goods. She knew that all positions have their peculiar trials, and that wherever one goes he shall find the cross, and that it was not by shifting and changing homes that she could win respectability or confidence. Nora knew that human nature is the same everywhere, and, if she fled from these disagreeable trials at Mrs. Sydney's, where really she found much genuine, true kind-heartedness, she might fare worse elsewhere.

Several times she had inquired for news at the "Pilot" Office. She had written hopefully and cheeringly to Mrs. Halloran, once, but told Dennis Byrne, in her letter to him, how she was troubled, and inclosed two months' wages, which she charged him to "use for the comfort of those he had the care of, but not for the world let them know how it came." As yet she had received no reply, and the light began to fade from her eye, and the crimson from her cheek. "Hope deferred," blending with sometimes a feeling of home-sickness, gave poor Nora many a thrae in her heart, and on two or three occasions she thought she was dying, she felt so oppressed and heavy.

One evening, the eve of a great festival, she had asked permission and gone to confession. It was bitterly cold.

Snow lay deep in the streets, and a drizzling mist of frozen snow and rain, lashed by an easterly wind which roared savagely in from the bay, almost blinded those who encountered it. There were but few persons abroad that evening. All who had homes were either there, or hastening toward them. Nora drew her cloak closely about her, and, pulling her thick veil over her face to protect it from the sleet, hurried homeward as rapidly as she could through the banks and drifts of snow which were every instant accumulating on the sidewalk. Her foot struck against something, and she stooped down and picked up a tolerably large package, wrapped carefully, but wet and muddy.

A furious blast of wind came howling up the street, a chimney fell not far off, a quantity of slates from a roof came clattering down over her head, but fell clear of her, and in the confusion and fright of the moment she thrust it into her pocket, soaking wet as it was, and, nerving herself for a desperate struggle with the storm, she at last succeeded in reaching home, faint and exhausted with the cold. Forgetting entirely the bundle she found in the snow, she changed her dress, and, as soon as her strength returned, she went about her usual business, with no other concern than a fear that she should not be able to get to church in the morning.

When she opened the door of Mr. Mallow's apartment, to go in and light his fire, a scene presented itself to her which caused her to start back and pause. Two candles were burning, one on the mantel, one on the floor. Everything in the room was in the wildest disorder. Clothing was strewed here and there, papers were scattered in every direction, his wardrobe-doors wide open, and the bedclothes tossed in a heap together in the middle of the bed, while he sat upright in

his leather-backed chair, as rigid and motionless as if he were dead. There was a strange glare in his eyes, and Nora feared that he had become suddenly deranged.

"Are you ill, sir?" she asked, timidly.

"No," he growled.

- "And what has tossed your room up, sir, so dreadful?" she asked.
- "Be silent, girl! Is it any of your business? Let the room be. I tossed it."
- "Shall I light your fire, sir? it is very cold; and you have two candles burning away."
- "Two candles! I am mad! I am ruined! Put them out. I haven't a farthing to buy another! No; I'll freeze."
- "I'm afraid you're ill, sir," said Nora, extinguishing the candle on the floor. "Let me call Mrs. Sydney."
- "Call the police! send for the police! I've been robbed and am ruined," he growled.
- "Robbed, sir! Ruined, sir! Lord save an' defend us, but surely you're mistaken," exclaimed Nora.
- "Robbed, sir!" said the excited old man, mimicking her.
 "Ruined, sir! Yes, robbed of ten thousand dollars.
 Now go away."
- "God save us, an' surely that's a heavy loss," said Nora, with such genuine pity and commiseration in her voice that he called her back.
- "I believe you are sorry. Well, keep it all to yourself. I don't wish it spoken of to any one in the house, for Mrs. Sydney would go off in a fit of fantods, and by six o'clock to-morrow it would be in every paper in Boston, and telegraphed from Maine to Georgia. The rogues put upon their guard would escape, and I be left to resign myself to the loss as I best might. So hold your tongue, if you can."

"I will, sir, if it will be any comfort to you," said Nora.

"I believe you. I trust you, because you have never wasted my candles or wood, nor opened my wardrobe, nor inspected my pockets. Aha! I have a way of finding these things out, but you're an honest girl, Nora; but it remains to be proved whether or not you can hold your tongue."

"Thank you, sir," said Nora, leaving the strange old man to go down to arrange the tea-table. "It's no wonder he's crazy. Ten thousand dollars! It's a great sum, surely; an' I hope in my heart he'll find it ag'in."

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CHAPTER VIII.

"Sweet it would be once more to see

The earth where my fathers rest,

And to find a grave by the sounding wave

In homeland of the lovely west."

Mr. Mallow's heavy loss was kept a profound secret from Mrs. Sydney and her family, who only observed that he had suddenly become more silent and disagreeable than usual, and that his cheeks looked more sallow, while, notwithstanding all his attempts to steady it, his hand shook nervously whenever he lifted his cup or tumbler to his lips. But, well acquainted with the peculiarities of his rasping, unhappy temper, they supposed that he had failed in some speculation, or had met with something in his extensive business-operations to annoy him. But the detective police of Boston and Nora Brady knew all about it. He engaged the skillful services of the detectives to ferret out the misguided and criminal person who had robbed him. He furnished them with a circumstantial description of the notes or bills and the wallet which contained them. He supposed he was robbed between his place of business and home. He was certain of having put the wallet in his breast-pocket before he left his counting-room, and he had missed it the moment he reached his room. This was all the information he could give them; but they had managed with success more obscure and intricate cases than this, and, incited to extraordinary efforts by the

prospect of a liberal reward, their expectations were sanguine.

Toward Nora Brady the strange old man's manner was fitful, but kind. He frequently called her "a good honest girl," but steadily refused the necessary comforts of lights or fire; while she, really sympathizing with him and feeling sorry for his isolated loneliness, strove in every way she could to make him comfortable; all of which sunk quietly down like soft dews into his sterile heart, warming it with more human feeling than it had ever known before. When Monday morning came, Nora was up with the dawn. She had an unusual number of clothes to wash that week, and she wished to begin early, to avoid neglecting her other work. Having gathered the household linen, and the few pieces belonging to Mrs. Sydney, together, she unlocked the closet to take out some articles belonging to herself to do up, when she observed, for the first time, the soiled and muddy appearance of the nice mousselaine de laine dress she had worn to confession the evening of the storm. Mrs. Halloran had given it to her for a birthday-gift some months before, and she felt pained to see it so soiled and, as she feared, ruined.

"Agh!" said Nora, taking it down from the peg on which it hung. "It is easy enough to get the mud out with soap an' water, but my fear is that the beautiful blue flowers an' these roses will come out along with it. But it can't stay so; that's certain; an', to give it a chance, I'll shake it well, then rub it between my two hands to see if I can clean it that way."

So, with the dress in her hand, she went round to the window, through which the first red sunbeams were stealing; and, rubbing the dry mud off quite easily, she gave it one good shake, when something fell with a heavy thud to the floor, and, turning quickly, she looked down and

saw the package she had picked up in the snow. Nora laughed a low, merry laugh at her own forgetfulness, for she had never thought of it until that moment, and took it up to examine it. "It's an ould thing, anyway," she said, turning it over; "an ould, greasy, ragged budget, an' if there's thread an' needles an' some snuff or tobacco in it, it's about as much as it's worth. What in the world it is I don't know, an', faith, I'm afeard to handle it; there's no tellin' the fingers that tied it up so tight, or what disease was in 'em. Anyway, if it's anything worth having, it's none of mine, an' I must see to that at once."

By this time Nora had unfastened the numerous strips of red tape which were wrapped around it, and unclasped the steel fastenings; then it fell open in her hands. A mortal paleness overspread her face, and she sank trembling in a chair beside her, exclaiming, "Merciful God, defend me!" And well she might be terror-stricken at first, for it was - stuffed with bank-bills of various denominations, -some old, some new, but all of high value. She touched them with her fingers, lifting their edges carefully. "One thousand, two thousand, three, four, five, six thousand! more-more and more!" she murmured, gazing with a half-stupefied look on the treasure. There was a dimness in her sight, and a strange singing in her ears. "Ho! lucky Nora! Now are your labors ended. You have found a great treasure; your trials are past; you need toil no longer; you can buy another Glendariff for those you so dearly love; and, best of all, you can marry Dennis. Close up that wallet, you silly child; it is yours; you found it; no one claims it. Use its contents and purchase happiness." Thus sang the Tempter of her soul to poor bewildered Nora, who sat trembling and numb, still gazing down on the bills, when suddenly a movement of her hand caused a memorandum-leaf to move

aside, and she saw, in almost effaced gilt letters, but still very legible, the name of "STEADFAST MALLOW." In an instant the cloud fled, and all was clear. A bright, happy smile flashed over her face, and, falling on her knees, she thanked God in all the earnest simplicity of her heart for the discovery. "I knew, my heavenly Father, that it was none of mine; an' I wouldn't have held it an hour longer in my possession. I would have taken it to the dear soggarth,* thy faithful servant, to be restored to its lawful owner, only thou hast shown me what to do, for which I thank thee for ever an' ever." Then she rose to her feet, and, holding the precious wallet close to her breast, as if she feared it would fly away, ran with light and joyous steps down to Mr. Mallow's door, where for an instant she hesitated; but, hearing a movement within, she knew he was up, and knocked.

"What now, Nora Brady?" he said, gruffly, as he opened the door.

"Oh, sir, here it is! Take it, in the name of God! I found it in the street the night of the storm, and forgot all about it," she exclaimed, thrusting the wallet into the astonished old man's hands, as he stood pale and trembling on the threshold of his door. "It is yours, sir; your name is in it."

"Eh—mine—street—name!" he gasped out, while he clutched the wallet, and looked wildly at Nora.

"You must have dropped it, sir, that night in the snow. I was coming from church, an' stumbled against something, an' picked it up, an' it was this. But faith, sir, the storm got so wild at that minute, and a chimney fell not far off, an' the tiles come clatterin' over an' around me, so that it scared the life out of me. I poked it down into

my pocket and run for my life, sir; an' by the time I got home, what with being half frozen, an' out of breath, an' the scare I had, I never thought of the thing again till this morn'. I took out my dress to wash to-day, an' shook it, when out tumbled your wallet; an', when I opened it, sir, I declare to my ould shoes, I was half kilt with the fright to see such a power of money in the hands of a poor girl like me; an' I'm as glad, Mr. Mallow, that you've got it all safe again as if it was my own," said Nora, rapidly.

"Stop, stop. Go away until I count it. Of course it's mine, Nora Brady; but it'll be a bad thing for you if a cent of it is missing," he said, while his teeth chattered with cold, and his whole frame quivered with excitement. "I'll ring for you presently."

Over and over again the old man counted the bills. He lit a candle; for the light was dim in his room. Excited and confused, he put on two pairs of spectacles, and turned the notes first on one side, then on the other. He scrutinized the wallet inside and out; the mud-splotches still clinging to it, and the stains of the sloppy place in which it had fallen. Then he counted the money all over again.

"It's all here; every note. Not even a small gold piece gone. She's an honest girl,—an honest, good girl. But she'll want a great reward, I'll warrant; more than she'll get, that's certain"

He then rang his bell, which Nora answered directly, for some undefined fears and uneasiness had begun to possess her mind.

"It's all right, Nora Brady. It's all here, just precisely as I put it in myself the day I lost it. You are an honest girl. Some might suspect you; but I don't, because you never wasted my wood and candles. Now tell me, what do you expect me to give you?"

"Give me, sir? Nothing," she said.

"But of course you expect some reward?"

"Faith, then, sir, I'm paid enough to think it's with the right owner. You dropped it, an' I picked it up; so it's yours, an' not mine; an' I'm only sorry I didn't think of it at first, though to be sure I never dreamed what it was. If I had, it would have saved you a deal of trouble, an' you might have had a fire and candles all these cold nights that you've been without," said Nora, with simplicity.

"And you wish no reward?" he asked.

"I wouldn't take a cent, sir, by way of being paid for doin' my duty, to save me from beggin'. It wouldn't seem right; an' I won't do it."

"You're a fool, Nora,—a perfect fool. But remember, from this day, old miser Mallow, as I am called, is your friend; and if at any time I can help you, I will, so help me God!" said the old man, with quivering lips.

"Thank you, sir. A time may come for that. But breakfast's almost ready," she said, going away.

"Halloo! come back here, you wild Irish jade,—come back."

"My work is all behindhand this morning: please to say quick what you want," she said, turning back.

"Leave me to speak of this matter to Mrs. Sydney. I don't like my affairs gossiped about. If you were to tell it, some would believe you and some wouldn't: so it's best to come from me, as I believe every word you have said. And, mind, you may light me a fire to-night," he said.

"And a candle, sir!" said Nora, turning away with a light-hearted laugh.

After breakfast, Mr. Mallow had a long private conversation with Mrs. Sydney in the parlor; and that same

day, without taking a human being into his confidence, he deposited five hundred dollars in the Trenton Bank to the credit of Nora Brady. He paid the detectives for the trouble and expense they had been at, and silenced their inquiries by informing them that he had mislaid his wallet and unexpectedly found it. They thought, as he was a very rich old man, such eccentric freaks were not only allowable, but diverting, and gave themselves no further concern in the affair, except to record the case as being disposed of.

Mrs. Sydney only spoke more gently and kindly to Nora after that long conference with Mr. Mallow, and would frequently lay down her knitting and sewing to take a long, earnest look at her, as she flitted around, through her spectacles, which, whenever Nora observed it, always warmed the blushes on her cheeks, because she could not imagine why she had so suddenly become an object of such particular interest to the old lady, to whom she was becoming attached. She was gradually winning friends. Her obliging disposition, her practical piety, yes, the practical piety and virtue of an humble domestic, caused those who lived in daily intercourse with herpersons who rejected the most essential truths of religion; of whom some were transcendentalists, and others were bitter and bigoted in their errors-to look with an eye of interest and respect towards the old creed whose precepts her life illustrated with so much simplicity and faith. Even Phillis, sticking her arms akimbo, and holding her turbaned head back with a sagacious and patronizing air, allowed "she was a good gal, an' not so good either that she was goin' to 'low anybody to trample on her. She's done got me under, honey, an' how she's done it dis child's onable to 'spress; case, you see, honey, she's sorter kind in her ways, an' a sorter proud like; and, as

to work, ki! she outwork me any day. I reckon she's a good gal, if she are a Cafolic." Thus spoke the oracle of the kitchen.

"Dear suz," says Mrs. Sydney, "it's nothing that she pleases me; but to think she's got around and made friends with such a high shiftless body as Phillis, and such a tight person as Mr. Mallow, is beyond my comprehension. But she's a good girl. She practices her religion, and is never ashamed to own up to being a Catholic, and can always give a reasonable answer when she is asked questions about her faith."

And Mrs. Sydney placed unlimited confidence in her. The poor old lady, who had always borne her troubles and the annoyances of her position with patience, now obtained some rest, body and mind; for Nora could be trusted in every particular; and the girl would have been quite happy but for those sad memories of home, which came ever, like cold soughs of wind, over the hopeful and genial world of her heart. It would have cheered her had she received a letter, or even heard where Mr. Halloran was; but several months rolled by, and she had not heard a word either from Ireland or of him. She had made other remittances to Dennis for the general fund; and the thought that she was at least aiding to keep away the wolf from the door of those she loved, gave her a degree of happiness; then, when the shadows darkened around her, her firm and loving trust in God would brighten the clouds, until the rainbow, Hope, shone out, cheering her with visions of brighter and better days.

Mrs. McGinnis, her friend, had been ill, and, as frequently as she could arrange her business so as to leave nothing undone, she had got permission to go and help to nurse and watch with her; and every time she went, Mrs. Sydney would place some little delicacy in her hand

to tempt the appetite of her sick friend. One night she was returning home from her mission of kindness, attended by Thomas McGinnis, when, as they were passing through an obscure street, they saw three or four men standing on a door-step, talking loudly and earnestly, while others were passing in and out, men and women together.

"Is anything amiss, friends, with the widow Blake?" asked McGinnis.

"Och, the widdy's safe enough; but it's a gintleman that was passing, an' fell down in a fit, an' we think he's dying," replied one of the men.

"An' have they brought a doctor yet?" asked Thomas.

"Two or three's gone for the docther, but there's none come yet; an', bedad, it's my opinion that he'll die before one comes."

"Has any one brought a priest?"

"One of the boys went for his reverence; but it's likely he's not a Catholic, but a pagan, like the rest of the people in Ameriky; for it bates Bannagher itsel' to tell what they b'lieve and what they doesn't."

"Thrue enough for you; but there's no telling who the grace of God is with, and who it isn't, in a dying hour. Anyway, I hope his reverence will come. I will go for Dr. Bryant, if you will go in, Miss Brady, and sit with widow Blake, who's a dacent, hard-working crayther as ever broke bread."

"Of course I'll wait, Mr. McGinnis, and see if I can be of some use, too," replied Nora, going into the house, and entering a small room which communicated with another by an old-fashioned, narrow door. Two or three women were sitting around, taking snuff, and suggesting to each other a thousand infallible remedies for the sick person's relief, which in their own experience had worked

miracles. Mrs. Blake now bustled in to get the vinegarcruet, and in her hurry almost stumbled over Nora, who said, with a modest air, "I came with Mr. McGinnis, ma'am. He is gone for the doctor, and I shall be glad if I can help you at all."

"Well, I don't know about help,—poor gintleman! he's dying, I think. I wish to God we could find his friends," said kind-hearted, fat Mrs. Blake, in a distracted manner. "But come in, honey, an' see what you think."

Nora followed her with a timid step into the small, dingy room. On a bed in the corner the sick man lay; but she could not see his face, or even his person, because there were two or three women grouped around him, attracted by that strange fascination which the appearance of death always presents to the living. The atmosphere of the room was stifling from the heat of the stove and the number of breaths in it, and Nora quietly opened the door and raised the window a little way, then resumed her seat. A dip candle burned in a tin candlestick, on a table which stood in a recess beside the chimney, and the flickering shadows it cast on the wall, with the quick, gasping sobs of the unconscious man, filled Nora's heart with a nameless terror; a weakness and trembling came over her, and a strong desire, which is common under such circumstances, took possession of her, to look on the sufferer's face. She approached the bed and quietly waited until one of the women moved away, then looked down on the white, convulsed features before her. Was she dreaming? Was she bereft of her senses and subject to an illusion, that John Halloran's name was blended with the low, sharp cry that burst from her lips? She flew across the room, snatched up the candlestick and brought it to the bedside, and, holding it close to the face of the dying man, scanned his features, and gently lifted

the dark, clustering masses of hair back from his temples and forehead. "It is his blessed self, thanks be to God!" she exclaimed, bursting into tears: "it is my poor master, Mr. Halloran!"

At that moment McGinnis returned with Dr. Bryant, who was soon followed by a clergyman; and words cannot paint the amazement of the whole party when they learned that the unconscious man before them was the noble, the brave, the beloved John Halloran, whom they had all loved without having ever seen. The physician ordered the room to be cleared, and requested the clergyman and Thomas McGinnis to remain and assist him. As to Nora, she knelt quietly in a corner of the next room, pouring out her soul to God, and pleading earnestly for the restoration of the stricken man, who was one of that band about whom the tenacious fibers of her heart's warm love had been clinging for years.

And she felt that her Father in heaven would succor him.

She would now claim help from Mr. Mallow.

And she thanked God, and felt comforted that in the publisher who had so kindly assisted her Mr. Halloran had a friend.

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CHAPTER IX.

"Oh, blessed be that warning, my child, thy sleep adorning,
For I know that the angels are whispering to thee;
And while they are keeping bright watch o'er thy sleeping,
Oh, pray to them sweetly, my baby, with me,
And say thou wouldst rather they'd watch o'er thy father;
For I know that the angels are whispering to thee."

THE rich autumnal glories, the burnished shadows of golden sunlight, were over. The thrush had sung her last song on the moss-covered turrets of the ruined abbey of Fada-Brae, and a wild, cold wind had swept down from the Galties, like an "army with banners," and torn away the few withered leaves which had been left clinging, like human hopes to earthly promises, to the bare and gnarled branches overhead. For two months no letter had come from Nora Brady, and, heart-sick with anxiety, Mrs. Halloran had almost ceased hoping to hear from her husband. Innumerable fears assailed her, and her imagination was filled with anticipations of some terrible disaster having befallen him,—of loneliness, illness, and perhaps death, in the land of the stranger. It is true that the roads had been almost impassable for weeks, and there was no way of sending to Buttevant unless Dennis Byrne walked there; and that was impossible, on account of the frequent storms, the swollen streams, and the piled-up snow-drifts. Many of her old friends and neighbors around Glendariff, Protestants and Catholics, had made a day's journey to see her during the fine autumnal weather, and had cheered her somewhat by their hearty sympathy and the on-dits

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They all knew Mary Halloran's poverty; but, not daring to offer pecuniary assistance, which they were well assured her pride would reject, their generous Celtic hearts suggested many modes of aiding her without offending her sensitive delicacy; and many a hamper of game, wine and delicacies of various kinds, found their way mysteriously into her larder, which caused Dennis the full exercise of his ingenuity and imagination to account for, by telling her plausible tales of wonderful purchases when he went to Buttevant with butter and eggs; and it was edifying to observe his patience when she gently reproved him for his extravagance.

"You know, Dennis, that we are poor, quite poor, now, and we must live according to our means," said Mrs. Halloran, on one occasion. "It is no disgrace to be poor, since our Lord Himself chose a life of poverty while He was on earth; but it is disgraceful to go beyond our means and get others into difficulties to support our pride."

"Bad scran, then, ma'am, to all the difficulties I'll ever bring anybody into by my extravagance. It's all ped for, sure; and it 'ud be a mortal shame for a lady born and raised like yoursel' to suffer for delicacies and the like, that you've been used to from your cradle. My things fetch a great price at Buttevant and other places. Faith! and there's no butter sells like the Brae butter, afther all."

"Thank you kindly, Dennis, for thinking of me; but we can do with less and more common food. Do not purchase any more game or wine: we have enough to last a year already," she said, with a half smile on her sad countenance.

"She'll have to know it afore long," said poor Dennis, as Mrs. Halloran went away, while a puzzled expression

settled on his countenance. "The blight is on the potatoes: they're rotted black in the ground everywhere, and I've been buying everything, until there's but little of my own left; and as to sellin' off the ould McCarthy More siller and jewels, the few that's left, why, agra! it's not to be done at all; for, as sure as God rules, they'll come to their rights again." And between him and Ellen there was as much state kept up around the wreck of Mary Halloran's fallen fortunes as if she had been a captive queen. She was tended with a watchfulness and care, and all her wishes anticipated with a fidelity, which can find no parallel under the sun, out of Ireland. Dennis generally circulated around the table at meal-time with an antique silver salver in his hand, and Ellen was as scrupulous about the courses at dinner as if there had been a banquet, instead of the too frequently poor meal of bread, cheese, and tea. The children were daily drilled into the importance of using their silver forks and table-napkins properly, and were in a fair way to believe that it was a much better thing to be poor gentry than rich parvenues. They were never allowed to do anything for themselves when either of their faithful guardians was present.

"It's not becomin', sir, or miss," Dennis would say, "for one of the ould stock like yoursel' to be lettin' yoursel' down to do such a thing when there's servants to the fore. Ye come of the ould princes of Munster, an' it's no use to try and make yoursels like common people; because it ain't in human natur' to do it. You might as well attempt to wash Major O'Grady's nagur coachman white in the Suire. What God made us we is, an' not all divil informers, with the English to help, can unmake it."

"And it's a true word ye've spoken, Denny," Ellen would chime in; "an' it's just as hard to make a silk

purse out of a pig's ear, as it is to make real gentry out of them that hasn't got the ould drop in their blood."

And through those sad, dim days when desolate winter lay around them, and the vacant places in the household made a winter within, the star of hope waxed dimmer in Mary Halloran's heart, and her steps grew feeble and slow, while smiles became strangers to the face which had once seemed to be created for them. The children, with their games and pictures, a pet rabbit, and a white dove which a lady had brought to little Gracie, were quite happy. The heaven abiding in the breasts of little children, makes all places alike to them, if they have those with them whom they love. Ancestral homes, magnificent furniture, and the appliances of wealth are but small things to these little ones whom Jesus loved: they value them as lightly and wear the insignia of wealth as loosely as should Christians of an older growth, who are directed to little children as to their best example. The bright free air, the blue sky, the glory of sunlight, the song of birds, the fragrance of flowers, enter largely into the world of a child's happiness; and these Mary Halloran's children had in precious abundance at Fada-Brae. Ere the winter set in, they had lived out on the brae-side in the fresh air and sunshine, gazing down into the beautiful glen below them, or beyond at the wild chain of mountains that inclosed the valley, and in their glee wishing for wings to fly whithersoever they pleased. Desmond brought into the closed-up dwelling the free glad spirit that had made the hill-sides re-echo with his glee, and, like a winter flower, cheered the silent ones around him. But Gracie was drooping. She was wasting. The rosetint faded from her cheeks, and she often complained of feeling tired; but that was all: there was no fever or pain; and Mrs. Halloran hoped that it was only the in-door

confinement which affected her. One morning Desmond and herself had been playing together, when she suddenly became silent, and sat down in her little chair, and, folding her beautiful hands together, became motionless and abstracted. It was her way whenever a new idea or thought was suggested to her which she could not exactly solve. Her mother observed her,—for, uneasy concerning her, she watched every movement,—but did not speak; she only wondered what puzzled the "little lady," for she well knew that she would come presently with her difficulties to her. While she sat thus, with her blue eyes cast down in reverie, her dove flew down and nestled in her arms. She kissed the gentle creature's head, and smoothed the snowy wings with her hands, which were scarcely less white, and said,—

"Birdie, where do the flowers go to when winter comes? Tell me, Birdie. But, ah me! what a pity you cannot talk, beautiful white Birdie! I shall have to ask my mamma."

"What is it, little daughter?" said Mrs. Halloran.

"Mamma, can you tell me where the flowers hide themselves when the frost and snows come? They don't die, for they come back in the very same places, in the spring, that they were before: so they must creep away and hide—the cunning little things!—in the earth." And she laughed at her own conceit.

"No; only the leaves die, dear one. The root, which holds the true life of the flower, remains in the earth; and when the warm sunshine and the soft spring rains come, it opens its bosom and sends forth the leaf and the flower again," said Mrs. Halloran, caressing the beautiful head which leaned on her bosom.

"And, mamma, would the flowers come out if the roots were not buried in the earth? It seems cruel

to leave the poor roots out in the frozen earth all the winter."

"They must be buried in the earth, to bring forth flowers," said Mrs. Halloran.

"Is that the reason," she asked, suddenly, "they laid Mary Flynn's little child in the churchyard, mamma?"

"Little children who are laid in the earth, Gracie darling, are like the roots: only their souls, which is the flower, bloom in heaven. They could not see God without passing through death and the grave. Heaven is their spring and eternal summer; God is their sunshine; and the earth holds their bodies until the great day comes for all the world to be judged: then, little darling, those dear innocent ones who sleep in the dust will arise, filled with new life and brightness, never to know death again."

"And will they have wings like Birdie, mamma?"

"Yes,-soft, white wings, like Birdie."

"I wish I might be planted in the earth, mamma,—that I might awake in heaven,—that I might have wings like my dear dove."

"My child!"

"Mamma, I would ask my heavenly Father to let me fly back again and watch around my dear, dear papa, who is so far away. Oh, I know I shall never, never see him again!" she said, while she threw herself on her mother's breast, weeping.

"Oh, yes; we shall surely see him again. You must not think so; for it would grieve him, because you are the dearest little birdie of his heart: so come, let us sing something he used to love," said Mrs. Halloran, with a feeling of indefinite dread in her heart as she uncovered her harp and ran her fingers over the strings The child leaned against her, and the entrancing music lured her away from her strange mood, and, lifting up her sweet,

tiny voice, she sang smilingly the strains that used to ring through the happy home at Glendariff. But the next day the "little lady" drooped, and often, leaning against her mother, complained of being very tired: then day by day the bloom faded out of her cheeks, and her footsteps became faltering and uncertain, and at last she reclined on the lounge near the fire all the time, or sat in her little cushioned chair beside her mother, silently caressing her white dove or whispering to her doll. One morning Mrs. Halloran observed her leaning back on the lounge, very pale. Alarmed, she caught her up to her bosom, and, folding her arms about her, said,—

"What ails my darling? Tell me what hurts you."

"Only my head,—a little; and I feel so tired," she said, faintly.

"Only her head! Oh, Heaven!" said Mrs. Halloran, wildly. "Dennis! Ellen! Desmond! come, some of you, instantly."

Dennis happened to be in the dining-room at the moment, and ran in.

"Gracie is very ill, Dennis; I fear the child is very ill; and I must have a physician immediately," said Mrs. Halloran.

"I'll go right off at once, ma'am, for Dr. Ward. It's only a step from here to his house; an' if he's not there I'll go over for Father Hanlon, who is as good a doctor as any in the country. There's nothing like the soggarth, after all, for the sick," exclaimed Dennis, hurrying away on his sad errand, heedless of the three miles of broken and unfrequented road between Fada-Brae and Dr. Ward's place. The snow-drifts and the steep slippery paths were nothing to that warm and generous heart: he had loved the child from her babyhood, and was scarcely less distressed than the mother at the idea of her being in danger.

The doctor came toward evening; he examined the child's pulse, and looked at her tongue; he talked cheeringly and in pleasant tones to her; but she was languid and silent, making no complaint, except that her "head hurt her a little,—not much."

"I fear," said the medical man, "that a slow fever is coming on; but in this early stage there are many efficacious remedies for it. There's not much the matter now, but I will leave some medicine, Mrs. Halloran, and call again to-morrow. We'll have you well, pretty one, by the time the cuckoo sings." Gracie smiled one of her quiet smiles, and held out her beautiful hand when the doctor said good-by.

Now, fully aroused to a sense of the child's danger, and her maternal instincts ever on the watch for the slightest change, other sorrows were forgotten. The doctor came again and again; he changed the medicines, he alternated the nourishment; but she faded and drooped, she wasted and grew paler every day. With her mother's hand in hers, she would lie quiet for hours together. Sometimes she would start with a happy smile from her fitful slumbers, saying, "I thought papa was here." "I thought I had wings like Birdie's." Desmond, anxious and sorrowful, crept in and out, and spoke in low, whispered tones, when he brought her toys and pictures, hoping to interest her as of old; and if he could win a single smile from her he was quite consoled and happy. Ellen would sit down and tell her, over and over again, the fairy-tales she used to hear with such delight, and saw in the kindling eyes and flushed cheeks of "her baby," as she used to call her, a bright promise of her growing better. Dennis could find no comfort. Twenty times a day would he creep in and look at her, then go out with noiseless steps, and say, "Inagh! sure she's fadin' like a snowdrop. Ochone! but it'll be the heaviest news of all to Misther Halloran! Glory to God! but surely our 'little lady' will be the fairest angel of them all."

Father Hanlon came frequently to visit and comfort Mrs. Halloran; he spoke words of consolation and sympathy to her; but in his heart he rejoiced that another soul was about to be housed from life's tempests and evils, that another one of the elect was about to pass away into eternal possessions; for surely of the predestined are little children who die in their innocence.

Mrs. Halloran never left her side for an instant: day and night she watched her, slumbering sometimes during the broken sleep of Gracie, but starting up at the slightest movement. Her restless hands were ever busied about her, changing her position, smoothing her pillow, with a thousand other nameless little cares which maternal love suggested. She could not bear that any other one should nurse her, so jealous was she of every moment that she lingered. But amidst it all there was an unacknowledged hope that her ceaseless care and tender nursing would bring her through; for the doctor still assured her there was not much the matter.

"Open the window, mamma, by my bed," she asked, one evening.

The window was opened, and in flowed a gold and crimson flood of sunset. The sky, like a "sea of fire," glowed behind the ragged and wild cliffs of the Galties, and above, in the blue, silent depths, a few splendid cloud-spots floated. The child looked out long and thoughtfully; then, turning her full, beautiful eyes on her mother's face, she said,—

"When I die, and go away up there, and have wings like Birdie's, can I see you every day through these windows?"

- "Die! Oh, my child, why talk of dying? Do you wish to die?"
 - "Yes, ma'am."
 - "And not afraid, my own?"
 - "No, ma'am,—not afraid."

Then, as if an angel had whispered it, Mary Halloran knew that her child was surely passing away from her; and, leaning her head down on the pillow, she wept in silence. She already felt the glow from the fiery furnace into which her bereaved heart was to be cast; she already tasted the bitterness of the cup she was to drink.

The next day she sat watching and weeping. The child lay still, but breathing quick and low. A footstep sounded on the threshold. She started, looked up, and her kinsman, Donald More, stood before her,—the destroyer of her peace, the spoiler of her home.

"I could not find the servants: so you must pardon me, Cousin Mary, for announcing myself so unceremoniously," he said, with an easy air.

"Why come you here at all?" said Mrs. Halloran, rising, and standing between the sick child and the unwelcome intruder.

"I came to inquire after my kinswoman's health," he said, with an air of effrontery. "I hope I find you well."

"Insolent!" she murmured, while the blood, receding from her face, left it very white; but she thought of the dying child, and the storm was calmed.

"This is no place for you, Donald More," she said, calmly. "I pray you go away. Your being here disturbs me."

"I am sorry to hear that, Mary. I came with far other intentions. I wish to be your friend and your children's friend."

"Friend!" she said, with bitter scorn depicted in every

feature. "You do not understand the meaning of the word. We do not need your friendship, even if you did; nor could I accept it for myself or them. All I ask is that you go away."

"I came on an errand which deserves a better reception, Mary. I know you despise me and regard me as the enemy of your household; but I only did my duty, and government chose to reward me with a grant of the Glendariff estate. I had reasons for not refusing. It is far better for it to be in my possession than in a stranger's; and now I promise, before God, that, on certain conditions, it shall return to your branch of the family again."

"And what may be those conditions? But speak softly: my child is ill."

"Well, listen. I have made up my mind never to marry—why, ma belle cousine knows; and I have come to the determination, with your consent, to adopt Desmond, provided I can prevail on him to give up the superstitions and follies of the Romish Church and adopt the Protestant Creed."

Donald More had lost all caste. Protestants spoke coldly to him, and avoided him; the Catholic gentry absolutely cut him with every mark of contempt; while the lower classes regarded him with distrust and hatred: for all alike in Ireland detest the *informer*; and for the sake of recovering a position he had fallen on this plan, knowing well that an act of justice to John Halloran's family would be the best recommendation he could offer. He was so full of it, and so sanguine of success, that he was scarcely prepared for what followed.

"You have said your say, Donald More; now listen to mine," said Mrs. Halloran, while her fragile form dilated with indignation. "Child of mine shall never be your heir. There lies one, dying. Rather would I consign them both to the grave, than accede to your base proposal. Let them be beggared, my God! or return to Thee, if Thou willest it; but through all preserve to them the gift of Faith. No, Mr. More: it is out of your power to serve me or mine."

"You will think better of it, Mary!"

"I am defenseless, sir. I refuse your proposal decidedly. I have told you that your presence is painful and unwelcome. Shall I have to tell you more emphatically that you are an intruder?" she replied.

"Don't trouble yourself, Mary. It is the way of women to get into the heroics. I shall go away presently, but will return in a few weeks to know the result of your considerations on the subject. One thing you cannot refuse me: I must kiss that child. She is one of the few things I have ever loved, Mary,—little, dainty lady," he said, while the nearest approach to tenderness he had in his nature gathered on his features.

"Do not touch her, I beseech you, sir," said Mrs. Halloran, leaning over the child. "Do not touch her. You might awaken and terrify her."

But the whispering had awakened her: she looked around with a bright, eager expression, then lifted her eyes to her mother's, saying, "I thought he was here."

"Who, darling?"

"My papa! Cousin Donald, how do you do?" she said, reaching out her dainty and beautiful little hand. "Bring my papa back, Cousin Donald, and take my mamma to Glendariff."

"Why, Gracie, little lady, what ails you?"

"Nothing much; only I am so tired waiting for papa to come, it makes my head hurt me. I'm afraid I shall go away before he comes, for you know I'm going far, far

away; but do you find him, Cousin Donald, and bring him to mamma and Desmond."

"I'll try, Gracie; but make haste and be well," he whispered, leaning over her. "When I come again, I shall bring some beautiful French toys and pictures."

"Bring papa, and give my best love to him," she said, leaning back exhausted on the pillow. "Good-by, Cousin Donald; I am so tired." And then again a portentous slumber stole over her senses.

"Do not come again, Donald More," said the agitated mother, going to the door with him. "There can be nothing in common between us. A wide gulf separates us. I will receive no favors from you; nor should John Halloran's children accept the slightest gift."

"Time, I hope, will soften your feelings," he said. "Farewell."

Inexpressibly relieved by his absence, Mrs. Halloran returned to the bedside of the little one, who from that hour seemed to sink, or, rather, like some fair thing cradled on a wave, to float gently away, without pain or suffering, toward eternity.

The next day Dennis brought a letter from Buttevant, which Mrs. Halloran tore open with eager expectation; but her face flushed up, and, throwing the letter from her, she sat for a few moments bewildered, trembling, and undecided. The letter was from her kinsman, begging her acceptance of a fifty-pound bill on the Bank of Ireland, which he inclosed. In a little while her determination was formed. She inclosed letter and bill together in an envelope, and, directing it to Donald More, Esq., of Glendariff, handed it to Dennis Byrne, who had been waiting in hopes that the letter contained news from America.

"Dennis," she said, "if you wish to do me a service, go instantly with this to Buttevant and return it to the

post-office. My cousin Donald has had the audacity to write to me. Yesterday he was here. I wish to return his letter without loss of time."

"Here, my lady? Why, then, it's a mortal sin I wasn't to the fore to welcome him," said Dennis; "for I declare to my sowl it would have been the greatest pleasure I ever had, to put him at a brisker pace from Fada-Brae than he came to it."

"Be on the watch, then, Dennis; for he threatens to come again. But go now."

"Let him," said stout Dennis: "I declare to my sins I wouldn't desire better fun. But I'm going, my lady, after I hear how Miss Gracie is."

"She is very weak, -oh, very weak, Dennis."

"Thanks be to God, she'll go to heaven without much pain; an' I pray His holy name that the angels will welcome her with their sweetest songs,—inagh! But it'll be a hard blow on Misther Halloran," murmured Dennis, while he lingered a moment to look at the child, dashing off, as he did so, the tears that fell from his eyes.

That evening, Mrs. Gray, the Protestant rector's wife, who lived in the neighborhood, and who had been very kind in her attentions to Mrs. Halloran, drove up to Fada-Brae, and brought some beautiful clusters of grapes and flowers from her hothouse to the invalid. She was a gentle, kindly woman, and Mrs. Halloran was always glad to see her. Gracie was awake, and smiled when she saw the beautiful present, and, holding out her little, wasted hand, touched the fruit and flowers with the tips of her fingers, in the same dainty way she had always done when she saw anything beautiful which pleased her.

"Taste one, my darling," said her mother.

"No, dear-but yes,-to please you, mamma."

They pressed a grape between her lips; but it seemed

to sicken her; and she said, "I would rather look at them." Then they laid them where she could see them, and her innate love for the beautiful found a quiet joy in the sight.

Father Hanlon came in, and brought her a picture of our Lord blessing little children. She looked at it long and earnestly, then gazed into his face with one of her earnest expressions, and held out her hand.

"You see, my dear, how Jesus loved little children. Their angels see the face of His Father in heaven; and He is always glad when they are gathered into His bosom."

"I love Him," she said, folding her attenuated hands together on her bosom, with a holy expression. Just then, Birdie, her dove, flew into the room, and perched on the cornice of the bedstead, where he sat, arching his white, graceful neck, and, while he looked down with his soft gray eyes on her, began a low cooing. She lifted her eyes, and a bright smile flitted over her face; and, while they gazed with looks of love at each other, a deep slumber stole over her.

Mrs. Gray offered to sit up and relieve Mrs. Halloran; but she thanked her, saying she would be glad of her company, but she could not leave the child. Father Hanlon sprinkled the dying one with holy water and benediction together, and, laying his hand on Mrs. Halloran's head, lifted his eyes to heaven and besought God to strengthen and comfort her when the dark hour came,—that hour so dark and bitter to a loving mother's heart,—and went away to visit a poor woman of the neighborhood who was dying.

The child's dreams, or visions, were pleasant and peaceful: angel arms pillowed her sinking head, and ever and anon far-off music stole around her; but she alone, led by bright-winged ones through the shadowy vale, heard it. They thought—those who watched

her—that it was so, from the radiant smiles that flitted at times over her countenance and the few whispered words that fell from her lips. Her hand, folded in her mother's, began to grow cold. Mrs. Gray brought the candle to the bedside, and it was clear that death was creeping apace through her frame; but her breath was still low and soft.

"Is this death?" asked Mrs. Halloran, with trembling lips.

"I fear so," was the reply.

"Then, my merciful God," she exclaimed, throwing herself on her knees, "spare her the wild agony and bitter struggle. O angels! bear her gently away and shield her from wild affright. Oh, my child! would that I might bear thee through the dark waters on my bosom, and place thee in the hands of Him who gave thee!"

The dove, startled perhaps by the light, fluttered down and nestled close to the bosom of the child, within her arms, while faint and more low came up her breath. Dennis and Ellen, hearing the slight stir, came in, and knelt sobbing near the bed.

"She is passing away very sweetly, my friend," said Mrs. Gray. "Let us not disturb her. It would be sinful to break in on such rest."

At that moment the child stretched out her arms; a slight shiver passed over her frame; then truly she slept that sleep which shall know no waking until the Resurrection morn dawns on the weary earth.

* * * * * *

For long weeks Mrs. Halloran lay unconscious and hovering on the verge of the grave. She knew not when the little coffin-lid was closed down on that clear face which was fairer than Parian marble, or when the white shrouded form was borne away and laid beneath the

mould. Nor did she know of those long, loving letters which had come-all of them at once-from her husband and Nora, telling her of his safety and prosperity and of her happiness and hopes; nor of how the boy Desmond, grown as gentle as a girl, had watched her day after day, and how Ellen's tender care and Dennis Byrne's indefatigable efforts and unceasing attentions left nothing undone. Of all this, with the kind attentions of her friends around the neighborhood, she heard when, after long and weary months, she had been restored to life and increasing strength, and when, amid fast-falling tears, she used to talk unceasingly of the one that was gone, and loved to hear of the slightest thing connected or associated with her. She grieved much that the dove had flown away. Ellen told her that the last time she saw it it was nestled on the dead child's bosom; since then no one had seen it; and when at last, shrinking and with feeble steps, she visited the little grave, she found that some friendly heart had caused to be erected over it a costly and exquisitelycarved marble tomb, on which hung a garland of halfwithered flowers. Over the tomb was a sculptured cross, from which a dove was rising toward heaven; but no one could tell who had paid this last touching tribute to the sorrows of the Halloran family.

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CHAPTER X.

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"Pain's furnace-heat within me quivers,
God's breath upon the flames doth blow,
And all my heart in anguish shivers
And trembles at the fiery glow;
And yet I whisper, 'As God will,'
And in His hottest fire hold still."

It was a long night,—that night on which Nora Brady had so unexpectedly found Mr. Halloran. She thought it would never end; and yet she feared that when it passed away another and a deeper change might fall on him, and that with the night-shadows his spirit would pass away. She watched and prayed alternately. The anguish that the absent would have felt, had they been present, or could they even have known it, was accumulated and mingled with her own grief; and, while tears flowed in silent torrents over her face, her heart could only find language in these words:—"If possible, my God, let this cup pass away from them."

When Thomas McGinnis went away, a little after midnight, she had sent a message by him to the friendly publisher in Franklin Street, stating how and where Mr. Halloran was to be found. She had never forgotten the first day she called at the "Pilot" Office, or the heaviness and gloom that oppressed her then, or the kind words which had greeted her, or the sudden sunshine which had burst around her when, after making her inquiries, the good publisher had exclaimed, "John Halloran! He is

my friend; he was my guest." And now she did not doubt for an instant that he would come the moment he received her message, and make every arrangement necessary for Mr. Halloran's removal to a better and more comfortable place, and for any exigency that might occur during his illness. This thought comforted her greatly; and, beseeching Thomas McGinnis to lose no time in the morning in delivering the message, she resumed her post near the bed of the sufferer. It was near day-dawn, and the doctor and clergyman stood together at the bedside, conversing in a low tone about the condition of the patient, while Nora leaned eagerly forward to hear their opinion.

"He is decidedly no worse," said Dr. Bryant; "and that is something, in an attack like this."

"And you think he may get over it?"

"Well, I hope so; yes, I think so."

"God grant it!" said Father Nugent, while he looked at his watch. "I shall have to go away in a short time: it is nearly five o'clock, and that is my hour to be at the altar. I shall return, however, as soon as I can. If any sudden change occurs, I must know it immediately."

"I have no patients very ill at present," replied Dr. Bryant, "and therefore I can remain here until about ten o'clock. Some time during the day my patient must be removed to more comfortable quarters."

"Yes: no doubt his remaining here would embarrass these poor people considerably, who have neither the time nor the means to render him such attentions as are absolutely necessary. If no better place can be found, doctor, my house and its poor accommodations are at your service. My own room shall be prepared, as soon as I get home, for Mr. Halloran's reception, if you think it will do."

"Do? Why, sir, it is the very thing; and I thank

you from the bottom of my heart for the suggestion. Perhaps in a day or two something may occur which will put us in communication with Mr. Halloran's friends."

"I beg your honor's pardon," said Nora, unable any longer to keep silent, and leaning eagerly forward, "but Mr. Halloran has a friend in Boston who will be broken-hearted intirely to hear of his illness; an' it's Mr. Donahoe, your reverence, at the 'Pilot' Office."

"Alas!" said Father Nugent; "how unfortunate! Mr. Donahoe left the city last evening for New York, and will be away several days; besides which, he lives at a hotel, which I fancy would not do very well for a sick person to go to. But, my child, why is it that you are so deeply interested in this unfortunate gentleman?"

"Och, your reverence!" said Nora, while tears fell like rain-drops from her eyes, "sure I was born an' bred with Mrs. Halloran; an' after the great downfall of the family she was so heart-broke at bein' separated from Mr. Halloran, who was hunted intirely out of Ireland, that I come to Ameriky to find him an'—an' do what I could for them at home, God save 'em. But I had begun to give up all expectation of ever layin' my two eyes on him again, when, sirs, the Blessed Virgin brought me to the widow Blake's this night, right to him. An' it's sorrowful tidin's to hear that his best friend is gone; but, your reverence, I brought over with me some of the ould McCarthy More diamonds, that Mrs. Halloran sent, thinkin' may-be he'd be at a deshort for means in a strange country; an' they'll pay all his expenses out-an'-out."

"I am glad to hear all this, my dear child. God will bless your fidelity Come to my house and nurse Mr. Halloran: let a familiar home-face be the first his eyes fall on when he recovers."

"If your reverence an' his honor there don't think I'm

takin' too much on myself, I'll beg you not to move Mr. Halloran away until I see the good lady I live with, an' tell her, and an ould gentleman there that has promised to help me if I ever was in trouble, all that has happened. The lady I am at service with, sirs, has a fine airy room, that I think Mr. Halloran might have; she takes a few lodgers, and it is a quite,* nice place; so, without throwin' Mrs Sydney out of a help, I might nurse him jest as well, an' have her to help."

Both gentlemen knew Mrs. Sydney, and thought Nora's plan was a sensible one; while they could not help admiring and respecting the nice sense of honor and self-respect which seemed to govern her in every particular. But Father Nugent could not remain another moment; and Nora, wishing to have matters arranged as early and speedily as possible, also hurried homeward.

Mrs. Sydney was sitting in the dining room, with a worried, anxious expression on her countenance; but the moment she caught a glimpse of Nora's face the cloud passed away, and, smiling, she greeted her with "La suz! child! where in the world have you been? I've been in a perfect snarl about you. You'll be sick, sitting up so of nights, an' may-be get some dreadful disease yourself."

"I am very sorry, ma'am, you had any oneasiness about me; but I could not come any earlier. Do you think Mr. Mallow is stirrin' yet?" said Nora, with a nervous air.

"Up! He's been up this hour, and was down here about ten minutes ago, to inquire if you had come home. He's in an awful humor. I declare, I shouldn't wonder if a mad dog had bit him some time or other," said Mrs. Sydney, sharply.

"Might I go up, ma'am, an' ask him to come down here? I want to spake to ye both about something that's happened," said Nora.

"Lord's sake, child, you haven't gone and got married?" exclaimed Mrs. Sydney, looking over her spectacles at Nora with widely-rounded eyes.

"Married!" said Nora, with a low, merry laugh which she could not repress. "No, indeed, ma'am,—not married, or likely to be."

"Well,—yes: go up to Mr. Mallow's room. But it is at your own risk."

When Nora opened Mr. Mallow's door, he looked up quickly, and gave an indescribable grunt, which said, as plainly as grunt could express, "It's well you've come."

"Good-morning, sir. I hope you are well?" said Nora, curtsying.

"Humph!"

"Mrs. Sydney wishes to see you, sir, for a little while."

"I sha'n't come. I'm busy. Breakfast-time will do."

"Sir, may I speak to you?"

"Yes. What do you want?"

"I want you, if you plase, to come to Mrs. Sydney: it's to ye both I'm after spaking to."

"And what in the mischief, Nora Brady, do you want to talk about? Has Ireland gone to the bottom of the sea, and do you wish me to fish it up? All women are alike, though. Go away. I don't know whether I shall come or not."

"Sir, I'm proud enough, in my poor way, an' if it was for mysel' I'd scorn to be throublin' you; but it's for them I love better nor mysel'; an', if you haven't forgot it, you said once if I ever was in throuble and wanted help you'd lend it, so help you God! But at the same time, sir, I want you to know beforehand that it's not money I'm afther."

"So you're in trouble. What is it? I always keep my word, Nora Brady," he said, pushing back the morning paper and taking off his spectacles.

"Yes, sir; I'm bothered enough, God knows: an' it was about that I wanted to see you and Mrs. Sydney together; for I have found Mr. Halloran, and shall have to go away!"

"Found Mr. Halloran! Go away! Begone down with you! I'm coming instantly."

And when the three were together, Nora told them all about it, speaking as little as possible of herself,-of her sacrifices, her trials, her anxieties, hopes, and fears, up to the present moment. As to Mrs. Sydney, she made no secret of wiping her eyes. Mr. Mallow was only affected with a sudden violent cold in his head. He, odd in everything, had always felt the deepest interest in the history of ill-fated Ireland, and, by way of obtaining the most reliable news concerning her ever-agitated and gloomy affairs, had for many years been a subscriber to a leading Dublin newspaper. He therefore knew all about John Halloran, and how like a martyr he had immolated his affections and fortunes on the sacred altar of his country; and he had learned from the same source that the nobility and worth of his character were without reproach. was with no ordinary emotion that this eccentric but truehearted old man exclaimed,-

"And you are sure it is John Halloran, the Irish patriot, who is lying ill, insensible, at the house of a poor widow who lives in an alley?"

"Yes, sir; an' the crature's been as kind as if he was her own kith and kin. But she's very poor; an' the doctor says it's not a fit place for Mr. Halloran to be in, because it's close an' smoky; an' I thought of the nice front room up-stairs that's been empty these two months,

an' says I, 'May-be Mrs. Sydney will let Mr. Halloran be moved into it; then there'll be no need for me to go away to nurse him;' an' there's no fear of losin' anything, ma'am, for he has enough an' to spare for all his expenses."

"Don't speak, ma'am!" said Mr. Mallow, blowing his nose vociferously: "Don't, madam; for I must have my say out. Nora Brady, it's my solemn opinion that you only want a pair of wings—to be a perfect wild goose. You are a heroine; and that's next door to being a lunatic. You are a miserable, shiftless body, taking care of everybody but yourself; and now, to crown all, you want to give yourself and us some horrible disease—ship-fever, may-be—by bringing a sick man into the house. But—"

"An' then, sir, I hope God an' Mr. Mallow will pardon me for demaning myself to ask a favor for the like of him," said Nora, with an indignation she could not con-"I may be a wild goose, but I've only done what I thought was right by them I was beholden to for whatever good fortune I ever had since I was born; an' I hope when I'm judged it won't turn the scales of God's mercy ag'in me. An' surely there's no need of goin' on my two knees to get a place for such a one as John Halloran of Glendariff; for Father Nugent hissel is havin' a room prepared in his own house for him, where I shall go to nurse him. Ma'am, you've been very kind to me, a poor stranger in your house, an' I'm sorry to take you at such a deshort; but it's my duty, an' I can't help it. An' it's no ship-fever that's on him at all, only a sug that took him in the head last night, an' deadened his brain like; an', if it was, it couldn't be caught from a better person; for he's a gentleman an' a Christian out-an'out."

"Nora Brady, you are like a torpedo. Your tongue

goes like a coffee-mill; and, now that you've ground me to powder, I will go on and finish what I was saying when you were rude enough to interrupt me. I was going to observe, when you broke out, that, no matter what ailed Mr. Halloran, he should come. If every boarder left the house on account of his being here, he should stay, and I would make good all losses to Mrs. Sydney,—partly for his sake, partly for yours. Go away!" exclaimed Mr. Mallow.

"I beg your pardon, sir. I was too hasty," said Nora, ashamed.

"Oh, never mind. A young lady who has money in bank, and who has independence enough to earn her own living, may be allowed a few airs."

"What do you mean, sir? I haven't a cent to call my own on this earth, an' never wanted it worse," said Nora, with a sigh.

"You are not telling the truth, Nora. You have at this moment, in the Trenton Bank, five hundred dollars."

"An' where, in the name o' my ould shoes, did it come from, sir? Faith, an' I think you might find something else to joke about," said Nora, puzzled and worried.

"Ah! I lost ten thousand dollars one fine night, and it was returned to me every cent. Did you think I should forget it? No, child. I went that very day and deposited five hundred dollars in the Trenton Bank for you; and there you'll find it, subject to your order. You can get any or all of it at any moment, or let it remain where it is. It is yours, to give away, send away, or throw away,—the latter of which I expect you will do. Madam, give the silly child an answer about the room. If the boarders should object to a sick person's coming,

let there be an exodus forthwith, and I will make up all deficiencies."

"Go, Nora, child, and get the room ready as quick as you can. Mind now and slick everything up nice. I'll attend to breakfast," said Mrs. Sydney, who had listened with no little interest to what had been passing.

"After breakfast, Nora Brady, I'll charter an omnibus and call here for a small bed, pillows, and other things, yourself included, to bring Mr. Halloran home at once. Begone now. I want no thanks,—not yet, at least."

Then Nora began to see sunlight breaking through the clouds. Mr. Halloran had been removed to Mrs. Sydney's without any ill effects: he was surrounded by every comfort, and no attention was wanting that his situation required. His symptoms gradually assumed a more favorable type, and, although he had not yet recovered his faculties, there was very little doubt but that the disease would finally yield to remedial agents. But two of Mrs. Sydney's boarders went away,—two young gentlemen who were so devoted to the violin and clarionet that they could not endure the interdict which Dr. Bryant laid on the indulgence of their musical propensities. While Nora attended to her work, Mrs. Sydney watched in the sick-room, and from the time it was finished-generally about noon-Nora went in and remained; for Phillis, with an air of condescension, had offered to get tea every evening "while de poor gal had such constant nussin' to do." Thus relieved, Nora would sit watching every symptom and almost every breath of the sick man. To the moment, she gave him his medicine, and regulated the temperature and light of the apartment with instinctive judgment. When there was nothing else for her hands to do, she would sit beside the fire, gazing down into the embers, while her imagination, like a

prophet, foretold many beautiful and happy things. She saw under grand old trees a stately home, where were once more united all that she loved on earth. She heard the sound of Mary Halloran's harp, and the clear, wild cadences of her sweet voice, ringing down through the magnificent woods, as she sang strains of the land of their birth. She saw John Halloran, his fine face, thoughtful and noble, walking with a stately step through those handsome halls and lofty rooms, and heard his kind voice speaking gently and cheeringly to all. Then floating up through the vision came sweet, flute-like tones. Little children were at play, and Gracie's gentle tones mingled softly with Desmond's merry laughter. Dream-tones indeed of the one who was gone, which would never more be heard on earth, for far away, beside the shining water which flows from the throne of God, her voice was blending sweetly with the angel melodies that make glad the celestial City. Then came a softer spell,—the twilight hour, the day's toil over, and a quiet stroll with Dennis Byrne through the old woods; and many a heart-felt word and bright anticipation seemed to be whispered in her ears, while ever and anon their thoughts fled back to "Holy Ireland" and lingered lovingly amid the scenes and beside the graves they loved. The entrance of Dr. Bryant or Mr. Mallow, or perhaps the crumbling of a coal, or a low moan from the invalid, dispersed the rainbows of her fancy, leaving only to her aching heart the stern and sad reality.

One evening Nora was standing by the bedside, looking down with a sorrowful heart on the pale, motionless features of Mr. Halloran. He seemed to be sleeping, and sighed heavily, then, opening his eyes, looked around him. Almost breathless, Nora sank quietly down on her knees; and, turning his head, he said, faintly, "Home,

Nora." Then a soft slumber stole over him, his breathing became regular, and a gentle moisture appeared on his skin. When Dr. Bryant came, he pronounced him out of danger. Little by little, when his consciousness was fully restored, they told him all. The first wish he expressed was to see a clergyman and receive the sacraments; after which he was more calm and composed, and talked with Nora, whose presence he could scarcely realize. He looked at her, and followed her with his eyes about the room, as if he were not quite convinced that she was not a figment of the dream-land he had been sojourning in so many days, and might melt away as that had done. But ere long he heard how it was; and, when he was strong enough to bear it, she told him all that had befallen his family since he left home. It was almost too much for him to bear. The treachery of Donald More roused within him a stern, bitter feeling of wrath, which yielded only to a softer emotion when he heard of his shorn lambs seeking refuge among the forsaken ruins of Fada-Brae.

"But I will be still, Nora. I will, by the help of God, bear it in patience, leaving the wretch who has robbed my children to His avenging justice. I have them all left to me,—I shall ere long have them with me,—my Mary, Desmond, and my gentle little darling Gracie. Why, then, should I repine? Such treasures are of inestimable price, and, possessing them, I am not poor. Do you know that the only thing I can remember during my illness was Gracie? Arrayed in white, and looking like an angel, the child was ever around me: she seemed to guide me, and to brighten the gloom of the terrible darkness into which I was plunged. Sometimes a white dove would flutter down on my breast; then it would not be a dove, but her. Truly it is a strange, deep love I

have for the little, quiet one, to brighten up such dark hours when all else was forgotten."

"It was strange, sir; but you always thought of the little lady more, by reason of her always hanging about you and following you about wherever you went, surely," said Nora.

They did not know that the fair little daisy of Glendariff had been beaten down by the death-storm to the silent dust. God help thee, John Halloran, when thou hearest the tale! No letters had come yet; and he could not conceal his uneasiness. Nora, hiding her own anxiety, said all that was cheering, and used every argument she could think of to convince him that it was not time for the letters to come, and that without fail a budget would arrive by the next ship. He tried to hope for the best, although not convinced.

One morning Mr. Mallow came in as usual, and, in his own peculiar and abrupt way, inquired if Mr. Halloran had made any business arrangements, or had anything in view, either professionally or in a mercantile way, for the future. Mr. Halloran replied in the negative. His next inquiry was,—

"Do you know anything about book-keeping and commercial life?"

"But little, practically," said Mr. Halloran, halfamused.
"My father in his early life was an eminent merchant of Dublin, and became a gentleman farmer at the old place in Munster when he retired from business. As you may imagine, he was a great utilitarian, and, among my other acquirements, insisted on my going through a course of commercial studies with his old book-keeper, who was then head of the house he had retired from."

"Have you forgotten it all?"

"No, no; I think not, sir. I have the unfortunate

faculty of retaining with singular tenacity all disagreeable experiences," replied Mr. Halloran. "But may I be allowed to ask you why you are so particularly interested in this matter?"

"Yes, of course. My chief book-keeper has resigned; he is going to California; and if you will have the place you are welcome to it, that is, provided you think yourself fully capable of keeping my accounts in order."

"This is a providence, Mr. Mallow,—one of God's merciful providences; and, after thanking Him from the depths of my soul, I thank you, sir, who have been His willing instrument. I was only this day wondering what I should do to support my family. It will suit me in every particular."

"But the salary,—the salary. That's the thing. It's only eighteen hundred dollars; and I won't give a cent more," said Mr. Mallow.

"That sounds princely, sir, to a man without a dollar. It is quite enough."

"It is settled, then? Well, rest a few days longer. I will attend to the books myself until you are stronger. Now, there's another thing. A year or so ago I bought a very pretty piece of property near the city, with good, substantial improvements on it; but, sir, it is going to wreck for want of some one to take care of it. The cottage looks dilapidated, and everything is tangled and wild around it. Now, if you choose, you can have it at a mere nominal rent, just for the sake of having it kept in order, because by-and-by they'll be running a railroad through it, or building a town there, and won't give half as much for it if it goes to wreck as if it was in good repair."

"It is the very thing I should have chosen,—a residence somewhere in a rural district. I have been accus-

tomed to the country nearly all my life. Sir, you are loading me with favors."

"Not at all. Don't thank me. A book-keeper is indispensable to me; so is a good tenant. Good-morning." And, pulling his hat down over his eyes, Mr. Mallow went out.

A few days afterward Mrs. Sydney came to the laundry, where Nora was busy, and told her that Mr. Mallow wished to speak to her. Wiping her hands, tying on a clean apron, and smoothing her hair, she followed Mrs. Sydney up into her own private sitting-room, looking blooming and handsome, but modest and unconscious of her beauty.

"Did you want me, sir?"

"Yes. Sit down there."

"No; I thank you, sir. I'm very busy, and I'd rather stand."

"Stand, then. Do you ever think of marrying, Nora?"

"Troth, sir, an' I think it's a quare thing for you to be asking me," said Nora, reddening.

"How would you like to be a rich man's wife, Nora,—
to become a fine lady and drive in your own carriage?"

"Troth, sir, an' it would depend intirely on who the rich man was, whether I'd have him or not. As to being a fine lady, I think I'm content to be jest what God made me,—an honest girl; an' as He's give me good broad feet of me own, an' health to make good use of 'em, I'm well satisfied to be without a carriage."

"And may-be a rich widow one of these days," went on Mr. Mallow.

"Indeed, sir, I've no time to be foolin' here in such nonsense as this. Is it all you want, Mr. Mallow, to be makin' fun of me?"

"No; not at all. I want a wife, Nora Brady, and

should like to marry you, if you'll consent, because you are a good, noble, virtuous girl, who deserves all the comfort and happiness that money can buy. If you will marry me, become my companion and nurse, I will leave you the whole fortune which I have grown old in scraping together. I am old, I am ill favored, I am cross; but you would not be plagued with me many years, child; and I know you would be all that God requires to me while I live. Say, will you become the wife of the old millionaire, Steadfast Mallow?"

"Sir, I'm only a poor girl," stammered Nora; "but I wouldn't marry you if you had a hundred million pounds sterling. You're old enough for my great-grandfather; an'—an'—well, I'm as good as married already to Dennis Byrne in Ireland, an' wouldn't break my troth to him to save my own life. But, sir, I beg your pardon for my plain spaking; I——" And Nora burst into tears, and turned to leave the room.

"Stop, Nora. I might have known you were not a bale of merchandise, to be bought with money, and I don't know but it's all for the best for me; for I'm a very cross-grained, jealous-minded old screw, and am not worthy of a good wife. I wanted a good nurse, and somebody belonging to me to leave my money to when I died. But it's my first and last attempt at matrimony. Some of these days, when I get many years older, and require help like a child, I shall come and live with you and that Dennis—what's-his-name, and expect to be well taken care of—eh?"

"You'll be very welcome, Mr. Mallow," said Nora, blushing. "You've been a great friend to us all, an' we'll be proud to return some of your kindness, sir. May I go now? Thank you, sir."

"I declare to my ould shoes," said Nora, as she ran

from the room, "if the ould gentleman hasn't been as crazy as a June bug ever since he lost that money. Marry him, indeed! He'd better think of his grave an't the other world, an' of the good his riches could do in this, instead of tryin' to turn a poor girl's head with 'em."

Nora evidently thought it was one of Mr. Mallow's queer freaks, and troubled herself no more about what had been the bitterest disappointment of the singular old man's life.

In a day or two, sure enough, the letters came, and the reason of their detention was explained. Father McCarthy, to whom they had nearly all been inclosed for him to forward, had been called to Dublin by the archbishop on some ecclesiastical business, and had been seized with a sudden and violent illness, which had detained him there many weeks. Thus the letters from America to Fada-Brae accumulated in his letter-box, along with the letters from Fada-Brae to America. John Halloran at last opened the one containing the account of the death of his child. He knew now that his bright little song-bird, the fair blossom of his heart, had fled heavenward. He knew that by this time the dust of the grave had gathered on that round, blue-veined brow that his lips had lingered on in that last farewell, and that the heavy mould had given forth its violets and shamrocks above the deep cell of that silent cloister where she slumbered. Other trials had lacerated and wounded the surface of his heart, but this struck down like a barbed arrow into its vital tenderness. They would have comforted him,-Father Nugent, Dr. Bryant, poor Nora, who so much needed comfort herself; but, in a low, choking voice, he only desired to be alone. Then he wrestled with his agony. He stretched out his arms, as if by the power of his love and will he would bring his fair spirit-child back to his bosom. He knew

now that she had been with him in the strange darkness he had passed through; and, as he called to mind the tender, beautiful face, the ineffable joy and sweetness that brightened it, his tears began to flow. They heard him walking to and fro, all day and all night; but no one saw the workings of this great agony of his life, nor for many days would he admit any one except Father Nugent, to witness his faltering and falling along this newly-found Via Dolorosa. But at last the tempest was stilled,—thanks be to God, such tempests last not forever !- the clouds were reft away, and through the vista of Faith he saw his angel child in a truer and more real life than this, cleansed from all earthly defilements, and for ever and evermore a dweller among the fair sons of God. But still like a mourner his heart lingered beside the little earth-garb that the fair spirit had inhabited; still the chill and gloom and loneliness of the grave and the long separation crucified its instincts; and, while the soul cried out, "Thou hast done a good thing, my God, in gathering home this child from the pollution of earth," NATURE, rebelling, still murmured, "My God, Thou hast struck me a heavy blow! Couldst Thou not have spared me?"

And from that day a change came over John Halloran. Many a gray hair shone out amid the clustering brown locks over his temples; he felt more like a wayfarer than a traveler on earth; and it became the aim of his life to think and act as one who was honored by the dignity of being the parent of an angel, to whose fair home his soul aspired, and who, he believed, often and often came and ministered to him, and who he hoped would be with him in the last struggle of life, to conduct him to the regions of eternal life. These thoughts were the companions of his inner life. Outwardly he was calm and gentle, giving a quiet and persevering attention to busi-

ness, occupying himself with plans for the future, directing the workmen who were repairing the "Brae Cottage," and, aided by Nora, selecting furniture and making every necessary arrangement for the reception of his family. None saw or intruded on his solitary moments: they only knew that a heavy and bitter trial had fallen on him in the loss of his little blue-eyed daughter, and their sympathy was none the less deep for being unspoken.

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CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

"But there are hours of lonely musing,
Such as in evening silence come,
When, soft as birds their pinions closing,
The heart's best feelings gather home.
Then in our souls there seems to languish
A tender grief that is not woe,
And thoughts that once wrung tears of anguish
Now cause some melting tears to flow."

THE hawthorn hedge-rows were white with blossoms, and on the brae-side violets opened their blue eyes under the tangled fern, while daisies, in fair constellations, gleamed here and there above the springing grass. note of the cuckoo was heard ringing at intervals through the air, as, attended by her little brownie, she flitted from tree to tree. Down into the valley rushed a mountainbrook, making wild music as it leaped in frothy cascades over its rocky bed, then winding gently and brightly away, like a thread of silver, through the fertile and picturesque vale, while here and there small plantations of willows which grew along its banks threw their long, green tresses right lovingly into its laughing waters. High up, in the blue, silent depths of heaven, fleecy clouds, with the golden sunshine on them, floated softly away, and wreathed themselves like coronals or hung in gleaming draperies on the summits and around the peaks of the distant mountains, while the balmy westerly winds

gently unfolded the timid leaves and blossoms. Earth would have worn that day the likeness of Eden, but that in the golden sunlight the decay of Time and the triumphs of Death told another tale. Amid the spring verdure, touched here and there with sunlit halos, the gray old ruins of Fada-Brae looked grand and beautiful. The clinging mosses, no longer brown, looked like draperies of velvet festooned from turret and tower, so rich and green was the tint they wore; while the ivy, with its dark, glistening leaves, garlanded, like deathless memories, the silent cloisters below. Amid them lay the dead of ages,-mitered abbots, monks, princes, and knights. The tombs were all more or less dilapidated,-at least, those of an ancient date,—and some were quite despoiled of the stone or marble effigies which had decorated them, and which now lay grimly on the earth, almost overgrown by the rank grass of the place. It had been for centuries the burial-place of the McCarthy Mores, though but few of their number had been laid there since Ireland had become an English province,—those who could afford it having gone abroad and lived and died in the Catholic countries of Europe, preferring exile to a sight of the grievances and oppressions which they could not remove, and which each year became more hopeless.

Mrs. Halloran's parents were slumbering there, and near them was a little grave, around which clusters of violets were planted like a garland, that, being in full bloom, sent out their spicy odors like incense on the air. Planted by a mother's hand, and watered by such tears as only mothers shed, they were precious memorials of the little sleeper below. The marble cross at the head of the grave, with its elaborate carving and soaring dove, now gleaming brightly in the sunshine, spoke not to the heart as did those flowers, those living types of the life

of the soul and the resurrection of the body. Mrs. Halloran and Desmond had spent the morning there, talking of the last spring they were all at Glendariff together, and of the "little lady" now so sweetly sleeping at their feet; of how she used to watch the unfolding of her favorite flowers and listen daily for the notes of the birds she best loved. Her little wise sayings were repeated, and her quiet laugh remembered, with a sad smile; then the questions she used to ask, so full of deep meaning, were suggested, as if by an angel, to lead the grief-worn heart of that mourning mother from the dust to the eternal heavens, where, in a truer, a fuller, a more blissful life, the child of her bosom was cared for more tenderly and surrounded by a more ineffable love than even her yearning heart could conceive of. "No: she is not here," said Mary Halloran, laying her hand on the little mound. "It is only the little earth-garb that we were used to see her in,-the veil our angel wore, and which, of the dust, belongs to the dust, yet still beloved because it was hers, and because every atom will again be gathered together and fashioned anew to receive for eternity the glorified being which, although living, we no longer see." Thus murmured the bereaved mother, with her eyes fixed on the blue, bright distance which rolled like ocean-waves, though silently, between her and the heavenly country where her child awaited her; thus she sought to comfort herself, and consecrate the crown of thorns which so deeply pierced her.

It was growing toward noon; and, calling Desmond, who was trying to decipher an inscription on an old tomb, they started homeward. They had not gone far when they saw Dennis Byrne coming toward them. Mrs. Halloran instantly apprehended a visit from her cousin, Donald More; but, to her great relief, Dennis informed

her that Major O'Grady from Glendariff had come over to spend the day. He was her husband's best friend; and she thought instantly that he had perhaps received later intelligence from him than she had, and quickened her pace.

"I am glad to see you, madam," said the major, meeting her at the door: "upon my soul, I'm delighted to see the roses blooming on your cheeks this fine morning; and Master Desmond, too. Faith, madam, you'll have a grown-up son before you know where you are."

"I am glad to see you, major: you are truly welcome. But allow me to offer you some refreshments," said Mrs. Halloran.

"Thank you heartily for the welcome, but the refreshments I decline, if you please. I breakfasted at a late hour in the valley, and do not wish to spoil my appetite for dinner. When did you hear from Halloran?"

"About two weeks ago."

"And how was he?"

"He had been ill, but was quite recovered, and thinks that but for the nursing and care of Nora Brady he must have died. It's a long story, major, but Nora has laid us all under a heavy debt of gratitude,—God bless her! and the end of it is that John is well and doing well."

"That's fine news altogether. Nora Brady's a noble creature, and deserves just such a husband as that fine fellow Dennis Byrne will make her. In France they would be pensioned by government for their fidelity. I was afraid the little girl's death would be a heavy blow to John."

"It was," said Mrs. Halloran, while her eyes over-flowed.

"Well, it's natural, I suppose, for people to grieve;

but I don't think it's right. No one could do for that gentle, little lamb what her Father in heaven will do. Just think of her being an angel! Why, by this and that, I think it's glorious,—too glorious a thing to shed tears about." And, by way of illustrating his precept, the major shed tears himself.

"How are our friends around—the old neighborhood?" inquired Mrs. Halloran, after a pause; for she dared trust herself no further on this theme.

"Around Glendariff? Pretty well,—at least all that you are interested about; and those who knew I was coming sent a thousand messages of love and condolence, which you must receive on my credit, dear lady, for I have forgotten them all."

"I am glad to be remembered," said Mrs. Halloran, smiling.

"I forgot them because I had other and more important affairs to think over and talk over when I saw you; and —hang it all, it's no use to be beating around the bush any longer. I came on business which I don't know how to let out for the life of me. I'm the very worst diplomat in the world. I don't know how it will affect you; but tell me, do you ever go off into hysterics, or faintings, or the like? for I tell you plainly, if you should give ever so small a shriek, I should be off like a rocket."

"I believe I have grown too strong in my powers of endurance for any such demonstrations, major. But I feel excessively anxious to hear what this matter is, which you have so strangely preluded."

"Well, it's no more nor less than this: your cousin, Donald More,—hold on, now,—the base scoundrel, is dead."

[&]quot;Dead!"

[&]quot;Yes. He was thrown from his horse one night,

coming from Kildare, and was so injured that he died in a few days."

"Then let all animosities be buried with him. We shall tread lightly over his ashes; and may God forgive him, even as I do!" said Mrs. Halloran, feeling much shocked at the news.

"He sent for me, and I was about declining the invitation,—for I despised the fellow most heartily, and expected no good from him,—when something impelled me to go; and go I did. I saw that he was hastening at a rapid pace to answer to a just Judge for the deeds done in the body: so I softened a little, and spoke to him like a Christian.

"'I thank you for coming,' he said, in a husky voice, after I had taken my seat by the bedside. 'You are the friend of those to whom I wish to make restitution. I mean John Halloran's family. Mary was my first love: I had hoped to win her; but she preferred another, and from that day I lived only for revenge. I hated John Halloran. But time grows short. You all know the events which have transpired within the last year or two, and how my revenge has been attained and gratified. But I am dying, and cannot say all that I wish. A few months ago I saw Mary, and I saw her child, the only thing on earth that I loved, dying. Mary was haughty and agitated, and told me in plain language that I was unwelcome, and that she scorned me too much to receive the slightest favor or kindness from me. It cut deep, sir; it stung me almost to frenzy. But the child turned her angel face toward me, and smiled while she held out her wasted hand to welcome me. And her words were sweet and trusting ones. I have never forgotten that moment. That bright little face has come to me in my dreams, and stood out from the twilight be-

side me; it has pursued me everywhere, and down in my heart I have heard her whispers stealing, just as they did that day. If I had lived, my cursed pride would have helped me through; but I am dying; and though I don't believe in the fables of Christianity, and am not actuated by any noble moral motive in the act, I wish to be forgotten entirely—to have my memory blotted away from the earth-rather than have the curses of generations spit on my grave for what men consider a criminal injustice. I therefore have left to you, as the best and oldest friend of Mary Halloran and her son, to hold in trust for them until Desmond is of age, the estates of Glendariff, with all lands, properties, and moneys appertaining thereto. The documents are all legally drawn up, and we only awaited your coming to sign them. Call Lawyer Dushane in,' he said to a gentleman who was in the room. 'A glass of water, major: I am sinking very fast.' And gad, madam, he got so white, and gasped so, that I thought he'd be off before he got the papers signed; but he rallied, and when they all came up, the lawyer, the attorney, and the apothecary, with the papers, he was able to write his name as steadily as he ever did in his life,—then watched us as we signed ours. I said but little, egad; for, altogether, it put me out of breath. I was dumbfounded, nonplused to an entirety, I assure you, and so rejoiced that I was afraid I might say or do something unbecoming the occasion. Then, I declare to you, I thought of the poor wretch's soul for the first time; for he was so calm and deliberate, and talked away so evenly, that I didn't see why I should bother about it, if he didn't.

"'Mr. More,' I said, 'you have done an act which God and man will approve. I thought, sir, the old honorable blood in your veins was only under an eclipse; and I'm glad from my soul, sir, for the sake of the royal and honorable name you bear, that you have wiped this stigma away. But, sir, you will be in a few hours before the face of an almighty and terrible God, who will judge you not as man judges. Let me beseech you, then, to make your peace with Him while you may."

"'Do you remember where I was educated, major?' he said, with a ghastly smile of derision. 'There, sir, is the apostle of my creed.' And I followed the glance of his eye, and saw on the mantel-piece a marble bust of Voltaire, whose sardonic countenance, in which was blended the scorn of Lucifer and the leer of Belial, could only find its likeness in the lowest cell of perdition.

"'You jest, Mr. More. I will not believe that you really entertain opinions so unworthy of an immortal soul, —opinions so daring and perilous, in a moment like this."

"'Have you been tonsured, major? Upon my honor, his reverence over there at Kildare couldn't preach a better sermon. But have done. Like an Epicurean have I lived; and amid roses and wine let me die. Ho! wine—the old Tokay, and the crusted port! fetch it up, quick! Never mind the cobwebs on their necks,—the black brave fellows.' Then he began to toss, and writhe, and utter such peals of frantic laughter that I slipped from the room. They told me that at the last, when the terrors and bitterness of death seized him, the most frightful visions haunted him; but at length, exhausted and powerless, he cursed God, and died Such was the death of an infidel."

"This news is horrible, major," said Mrs. Halloran, who was leaning back, very pale, in her chair. "Oh, the loss of a soul is a most terrible consideration! Poor, miserable Donald! Why did you forsake God and scorn the truth in your early manhood? Dear, sir, I feel much overcome. Will you allow me to retire for a little while?"

"Yes: go, my dear child, and lie down; and don't forget that Glendariff is once more yours. And if you should hear Dennis Byrne give a yell, don't be alarmed; for I'm going to step out and tell the news to the rascal."

Dennis didn't exactly yell; he only sprang some four or five feet up in the air, and danced a jig, interspersed with such a variety of remarkable pirouettes, and at short intervals such a hearty huzza, that the old major had much ado to keep himself from falling down with laughter at his antics, in which Ellen and the negro coachman heartily joined, without comprehending in the least what possessed him. At last he stopped, and, wiping the perspiration from his heated face, seized Ellen and kissed her, shook hands with the major, and flew at the grinning negro, whom he sprawled on the grass.

"I believe now, your honor, that the divil's out of me intirely," he said, quietly; "an' I beg your honor's pardon for cutting up such a shindy; but I couldn't help it. There, Mr. Snow, I declare to man I didn't intend the laste harm in the world, only you stood in the way of it, an' caught it. Come into the kitchen, Ellen, an' hear what I've got to tell you; an', bedad, if you don't fly up the chimbly I shall be glad. Major O'Grady, be plased to excuse my niglect, sir; but walk into the drawin'-room and be sated, and have some refreshments."

"No, I thank you, Byrne. I'm going over to the old cloisters for a little while. I shall be ready for dinner when I get back. See that I'm not kept waiting."

The major wished to visit the "little lady's" grave; for he, in common with all who had ever known her, loved the strange, old-timed little one; he wished also to look at that tombstone, made of the finest Italian marble, and carved by a master-hand, which had cost almost its weight in gold, and whose history he alone knew, and

had sworn to a dying man never to reveal, lest it should be torn away and cast in scorn from the sacred spot where he had planted it.

* * * * * * * *

In a few weeks Mary Halloran and Desmond, with Dennis to protect them, were on the broad seas, on their way to Boston, where a fair and beautiful home and loving and friendly hearts awaited their coming. In one of the state-rooms of the ship, so carefully guarded that Mrs. Halloran herself kept the key, was a large case, so heavy that it took six stout sailors to lift it in. Dennis Byrne had given out mysterious hints about its containing the old silver, gold, and jewels of the family, and the tars troubled themselves no more about it, except to say, every now and then, "that it was a wonder to see a lady, who had such piles of gold and silver, look so miserable and pale as Mrs. Halloran did." The captain was in the secret; for the freight of that mysterious case had added one hundred and fifty pounds to the profits of the voyage. It was a shell within a shell. The outer one was of oak, banded with iron; within was another of lead, which contained one of rosewood, which held a small, fragile, withered form, which was once a living, breathing, loving child. It was the body of little Gracie, which her father had directed to be brought to him, that it might be laid where he could sometimes go and weep beside it. In the hold of the ship, with their other effects, were the marble head and footstone, carefully packed and stowed away.

Nora Brady's vow was not broken. She accomplished much toward its fulfillment; and God, blessing her earnest endeavor, provided for the rest. Her day-dreams turned to real, substantial things; she saw those she loved, reunited and happy,—which was reward enough she thought. But the most acceptable and beautiful

virtue of the human heart, after charity, is gratitude; and it is one which God sees fit, in His divine providence, to reward many times, even on earth. In the course of a year Nora saw another little Gracie lying on Mary Halloran's breast; she saw Dennis Byrne set up in a thriving business by Mr. Halloran, who, in the receipt of abundant supplies from Ireland, was enabled to establish him on a capital basis, which gave him an opportunity to develop his resources and capacities for business without embarrassment; and, as the year closed in, Nora became the wife of her long-tried and faithful lover. She drew two hundred dollars, all that was left of Mr. Mallow's gift, and furnished neatly and substantially a small house, where she lived in happiness and comfort,-content with her station, and serving God with a cheerful and willing heart. And, after years had passed away and Nora's children gathered around her, they removed to a larger and handsomer house,—a house which we have been in before, but which, with its modern repairs and elegant improvements, we can scarcely recognize. Mr. Mallow had claimed the promise she made him when she refused to be his wife, not only for himself but for Mrs. Sydney, who, old and infirm, could no longer help herself. With Nora Byrne they found a safe and happy asylum for their declining days; and it is said that, after applying a portion of his wealth to the establishment of a "poor man's bank," Mr. Mallow intended to divide the rest between Nora's children. Need we say that the bond between the Hallorans and the Byrnes grew stronger with time, and that the troubled days of the past were often spoken of between them with deep emotion? When the anniversary of Gracie's death, or rather her birth into immortal life, came round, it was Mr. Halloran's way to gather Nora's children and his own and take them out to the

little grave; and, while they wreathed the tomb and grave with flowers, he would tell them, in tender yet cheerful accents, the brief but beautiful history of her life, and of its holy passing away. Ellen remained at home, and, at Mrs. Halloran's request, was installed as housekeeper at Glendariff, to take care of and show the place; for it had become a place of pilgrimage for strangers,—indeed, for all who had heard its history and who dared to go to the verge of treason and do honor to John Halloran. And if you wish to know how Nora prospers, go to the large and substantial new warehouse on the right hand side of —— dock, and ask the portly, prosperous merchant within, how he gets on. You can easily find the place; for over the door is written, in large black letters, Byrne & Co.; and the Co. is good Thomas McGinnis.

Desmond is of age, and has gone to take possession of his estate. There was, at first, a formidable array of objections interposed by the ever-active and argus-eyed government officials regarding the matter, and the affair was carried before the courts, and referred finally to the decision of the Lord Lieutenant, who, being more liberal than his predecessor, and wishing to conciliate the Catholic gentry and people of Ireland, allowed the young heir to enter on the full possession of his estate, its immunities and privileges. While the affair was pending, he was the guest of Major O'Grady, whose beautiful daughter Florence, it is whispered, will, in a year or so, be mistress of Glendariff.

Influential friends at home, who had never ceased to interest themselves to obtain permission for John Halloran to return to Ireland, at length met with a questionable success; but the pardon was so trammeled with conditions which would have embarrassed and annoyed him on all occasions when he might have aided his countrymen, at

least by his advice, and which the slightest public interest in passing events would have been construed into treason, that he rejected it with indignation, and besought his friends, as they honored him, never to make another attempt of the kind in his behalf. A good citizen, whose position and influence rank high,—prosperous and honored,—his adopted country feels proud of his virtues and talents, and respects the Faith which he illustrates so nobly in his life.

The widow Blake was not forgotten by our exiles in their prosperity, but received kindly and generous aid from them in her undertakings, which led to substantial comfort,—for which she never ceased to thank God, and always referred to the night Mr. Halloran fell insensible on her steps, as the most fortunate day of her life.

And when, in the quiet twilight hour, John Halloran and his wife often talked, in low, tender tones, over the troubled past, they never failed to refer to Nora Brady's Vow as the cause of their restored happiness.

Note.—In alluding to the outbreak of '48, I deem it proper, as nearly all the participators in it are living, to state that John Halloran is a purely fictitious personage, and the event and its results are only introduced to throw out, in stronger relief, the virtues of Nora Brady's character, who is a real and living person, and only one of a thousand of her class, whose sacrifices for the well-being of friends at home are noble and heroic. Many cases of the kind have come under my own eye,—two in my own family,—which are as deserving of immortality as were the acts of the brave daughter of the exiles of Siberia.

A. H. D.

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A TALE OF THE TIMES OF ST. PATRICK.

MATERIA DILLANDIA

OHAPPERI

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MONA THE VESTAL.

CHAPTER I.

"Thus shall memory often, in dreams sublime,
Catch a glimpse of the days that are over,
Thus sighing look through the waves of time
For the long-faded glories they cover."—Moore.

It is a tale of Erin—of Erin in her pride and the glory of her strength,—of the bright dawn of the day-star of her salvation,—of her sages and learning,—of her apostles and martyrs—that we tell. Let us leave the Present, with its fetters and gyves, its tears and lamentations,—let us turn our eyes away from those scenes whose glories, so faded by ruin and devastation, mar the fair face of Nature, and look far away through the dim ages of the Past,—from the twilight and shadow, toward the morning light of a happier day.

A scene full of splendor and repose, which lay like a jeweled crown thrown off by a tired monarch, sparkled and glowed in the sunset. Stretching away toward the south and west from the beauteous valley, mountains whose sides were covered with a luxuriant growth of white-thorn and fir, and a thick undergrowth of heath, whose purple flowers stirred beneath the south wind like the ripples of a summer sea, lifted their summits to the clouds. Through a narrow valley, or rather gorge, of the

Torc Mountain, whose rocky sides, overgrown by flaunting vines and rich mosses, presented uncouth outlines to the eye, the red and golden light of the setting sun flowed in on a lough* whose gently-ebbing waves were crowned by two isles of matchless beauty. Around their shores, through reeds and willows, the waters, tinted with crimson and sapphire and burnished with gold, broke with a gentle murmur, scattering long lines of foam like circlets of gems on the sands. There was then no lofty Abbey of Innisfallin, no massive towers amid the groves of its sister isle. There was then no stronghold on the crags and rocks beyond; for the clans of the Kenmares and Herberts, at this early period, had not conquered the territory over which they afterward reigned. A low rippling murmur broke on the hushed stillness of the scene, and, glancing through a rich growth of arbutus and fern, a bright stream threaded its way from its mountain-tarn, down over rocks and mosses, now flashing in tides of splendor in the sunshine, now lost in shadow, and ever singing in silvery notes, until, obstructed by masses of granite and accelerated in its progress by a steeper declivity, it dashed, a wild and splendid cascade, into the lough below. Here lingered the sunbeams, multiplied by prismatic lights into a thousand glowing shades,every drop of spray a living gem, every bubble of foam an embodied rainbow,-until it looked as if some spirit of eld had, in a moment of poesy, crushed diamonds and pearls and rubies and scattered the precious dust over the foaming waters.

On an overhanging rock a wild deer poised its feet, and, looking out of its great soft eyes with timid glances, stooped to drink,—the only sign of life in the

^{*} One of the Killarney lakes.

whole fair scene. But, suddenly starting, it threw back its head, nerved its slender legs for a perilous leap, and disappeared amid the shadows of the overhanging trees of the cliff beyond. A sound of oars, dashing rapidly in the waters of the lough, disturbed the quiet repose, and in another instant a curragh, rowed by a single boatman, shot round Innisfallin's Isle. Two youths of noble aspect, and richly appareled, sat in the stern, and looked with eager curiosity toward the shore. One was slender and graceful, with a complexion of olive, and hair of raven blackness, which was confined under a fillet of gold, that sat like a coronet over his broad, polished forehead. He was arrayed in a silken tunic, and robes of Tyrian purple embroidered with gold. He held in one hand an unstrung bow, richly ornamented, while he shaded his eyes with the other from the slanting sunbeams. His companion was a perfect contrast in form and feature. Heavily but not ungracefully built, his light flowing hair, his large blue eyes, ruddy complexion, and less aquiline but singularly handsome features, announced his Saxon origin. Suddenly the oarsman paused and left his oars in rest, while the curragh slowly drifted on the tide toward the middle of the lough.

"Lay on thy oars and speed us to you shore, serf!" exclaimed the dark one, with flashing eyes.

"I may not, noble," replied the man, pointing toward a grove which, gloomy and almost impenetrable, receded from the eastern shore of the lough. Then he bowed his head low upon his breast in an attitude of adoration. The strangers turned their eyes in the direction he indicated, and beheld a long and solemn procession of men crowned with wreaths of oak, and arrayed in white tunics, over which flowed ample robes of splendid and gorgeous dyes, with jeweled clasps, and broidery of gems, which flashed

back the sunlight as brightly as did the spray which spanned the distant waterfall.

They were led by one of tall and noble stature, but bowed with age. His white hair flowed back from a face already paled by the last shadows of life, while over his breast his beard hung like drifts of snow. His eyes, black, piercing, and brilliant, gazed with a rapt and seer-like expression toward the west. He carried, folded on his bosom, something wrapped in a cloth of gold, which he regarded with reverence and awe. In solemn and measured tones they chanted lofty strains, which, blending together in their different parts, formed a wondrous melody, which was wafted in sonorous and mournful cadences across the waters of the lough, and repeated in weird echoes among the glens and rocky clefts of the mountains.

When at last they came in full view of the setting sun, which through the distant and narrow gorge looked like a deity on an altar of flame, they bowed their heads in adoration, while their white-haired leader stretched out his hands and, with impassioned words and gestures, addressed the object of their worship. And while he stood thus—his rapt countenance still uplifted—the light faded, soft shadows of purple and gold floated over the scene, and in silence the procession returned toward the grove.

"Dius Fidius!" exclaimed the dark stranger, with enthusisam: "that was solemn and grand! Dost thou know, Sir Saxon, who those are?"

"The Druids!" replied the young Saxon, while a scornful smile wreathed his handsome mouth: "those are the Druids and bards of Munster, under the Arch-Druid Semo, famed throughout Western Europe for his wisdom and learning."

"He is also much reverenced in Gaul,—so much so,"

said the youth, "that my father, the Lord Count of Bretagne, has sent me hither to learn the science of letters under him."

"I wish his fame had been confined to Gaul, then, and not traveled also to Germany: then my father, a palatine of the Empire, and of old Roman blood, would not have sent me hither to learn wisdom from Semo. I wished to study in Rome!"

"Rome!" exclaimed the other, with scorn: "what are the schools of Rome and Greece? They know but little of the lore of the Egyptians and Phænicians, still less of the Etrurians; and who cares for modern learning? Not I! So, hearing of the high repute of the Druids and bards of Erin, I have come hither to study jurisprudence and literature."

"Bah!" said the Saxon: "I have no taste for solitude and study. Give me spear and helm, sword and banner, to slay and burn and conquer. Then the arena—the games—for me! I was at Rome once with my father; but even Rome, under the new sect of a Nazarene called Christ, is not as it used to be under Diocletian, Maximinus, and Julian,—when the beasts of the amphitheater—beasts from the jungles and deserts of Africa and Ind, fierce, burning, ravenous demons—fought, not with their kind, but with men, in noble and stirring contest. Bah! those emperors of the olden time knew how to find sport for the people!"

"By Prometheus!" said the other, laughing, "we must endeavor to be content in this our exile. This is a fair land,—this island school of Europe; and we can only pray the gods to give us fire from heaven for our brains, while we are chained to the rock."

"I like thy spirit, sir stranger. Thy name?" said the Saxon, as the prow of the curragh shot up on the yielding sands of the shore.

"Clotaire of Bretagne," he replied, modestly.

"I am Ulric of Heidelberg," said the other, proudly, as they clasped hands. "Canst thou conduct us to Semo?" he continued, turning to the boatman. "We will reward thee generously."

"I demand no reward, nobles. It is my business to see ye safely to your journey's end," replied the man.

"This is a strange land, by Thor!" exclaimed the Saxon, stamping his foot. "We are not beggars; we are nobles, with well-filled purses."

"All that may be; but ye are also guests," replied the man.

"Whose guests? Thine?" asked the Saxon, scornfully.

"The guests of Erin, nobles," was the reply.

"Per Apollo! Of all the countries I have visited, I have found nothing like this. It is a fine place for poor travelers, which we are not," replied Ulric of Heidelberg, standing still. "Here have I journeyed from Tuscar to Gougane-Barra, nor spent a coin. At every resting-place I find an inn and refreshments and servants and guides, and, what I care least of all for, volumes and treatises on the arts and sciences,* all at my service; and when, like an honest man, I take my purse from my girdle to pay the reckoning, I am told that one of the most sacred laws of Erin is the law of hospitality, and that it would cost that man who should transgress it, his life. I am tired of it. I can't believe in such national perfectibility as it assumes. Here," he said, haughtily, while he snatched a heavy purse from the folds of his girdle; "take this gold, or I'll hurl it into the depths of yonder lake."

But the man folded his arms on his breast, and, smiling, replied, "There is no law against that, noble."

^{*} Abbé McGeoghegan's "History of Ireland."

"Well, if I cannot break a law, it will be no pleasure to do it: so I'll keep my gold. It must be a rich country, forsooth, where a peasant refuses gold!"

"It is a rich country, sir noble. Throughout the broad land are prosperity and plenty. As to gold, we turn it up with our plowshares when we break the soil," replied the peasant, courteously but proudly.

"And do the peasants of Erin also speak the language of Rome?—or perhaps thou art the descendant of some old Roman legionary, who helped to conquer this isle, and speak the language for the love thou hast for his fatherland," asked Ulric, with less scorn in his tone and manner.

"Know, O noble," replied the man, drawing himself up proudly, "that this soil—this land—has never been polluted by the footsteps of Roman legions. They were driven from the frontiers of Erin, ere they crossed them, by the kings and chiefs of Tara, who swept down with their brave septs, like torrents from the reeks, on their flying cohorts. They conquered the barbarous hordes of Britain,—an ignoble conquest,—but their eagles found no perch and their legions no resting-place on our sacred shores. But pardon me, nobles. I am just what I seem,—a peasant; but, living with wise and learned men, and being the attendant on the teachers of the school, on the Betagh land which I helped to cultivate, I—well, I was neither deaf nor blind."

"So, so, Clotaire! This is a strange country, and a most strange people," said Ulric of Heidelberg,—"where learning and science are held in such esteem by all classes. But ho, here!" he cried out to the guide, who was leading the way. "Answer me! Is this thy vaunted land filled with priests and bards who do nothing but chant,

and sing, and worship the sun and moon? Have ye no warriors?—no armies?—no triumphs?"

"My time is almost spent, nobles; neither does it become one in my station to hold argument with such as ye are. Ask Semo; ask the bards: they will tell ye the tale of Erin's glories and Erin's heroes!" replied the man, speeding swiftly toward the grove, whither the two followed at a rapid pace.*

*All references made in the course of this tale to the customs, habits, and conquests of the ancient Irish, to their religion and its rites, are strictly historic.

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CHAPTER II.

warriors? -- no armies? -- no transpas (2)

THE TEMPLE.

"Where in Pluto's name is our guide? This gloom is impenetrable; and, to tell thee the truth, Sir Clotaire of Bretagne, I do not think it safe for us, who are strangers and almost unarmed, to venture farther into this dismal wood," said Ulric of Heidelberg to his companion.

"We are as safe here, Sir Saxon, as if the broad sunlight shone on us. This is one of the sacred groves of which I have heard, in the midst of which is a temple where the Druids perform their mysterious rites, and where the sages instruct youth in the sciences. But let us hail our guide. Ho! ho, there!—Ho!" shouted the young Frank.

"I am here, nobles," said the man, who was only a few steps in advance of them, but who was so concealed by the gloomy shadows of coming night, which crept through the great trees like dark-robed spirits, that they did not see him.

"Per Hercules! I did not know but that the earth had opened and swallowed thee. This gloom is like Tartarus," said Ulric, while the red blood tingled in his cheeks. Just at that moment strains of choral music swept past them, modulated into a thousand softened echoes and cadences by the sweet south wind, which breathed at intervals through the leafy and silent aisles. They paused, awe-struck and amazed. A louder and more solemn strain of melody—a rolling anthem of adora-

tion—burst through the grove, making the very leaves tremulous with its harmonious vibrations, while here and there, flitting like white fawns through the thickets, were veiled figures, graceful and agile, who sang wild-bird-like songs as they fled along. Then all was silent and motionless.

"Behold!" whispered the guide, pointing upward through an opening in the trees. "The Vestals are engaged in the rites of Nerf, known in Greece as Athena, but worshiped in Erin as the goddess of wisdom and purity."

The strangers lifted their eyes, and saw through the open space above them a purple vista stretching far up into the silent depths of heaven, from which the last soft beam of twilight had faded, in the midst of which hung the crescent moon, like a silver bark floating to bright but unknown shores, while the evening star, an opal-crowned spirit, followed, guarding its way through the deep,—images of purity and wisdom deified and worshiped in those earlier ages by nations who, dwelling in the shadow of darkness, understood nothing clearly of the existence of a first cause.

"It is a sacred hour," said the man, reverently. "We must approach in silence."

The Saxon looked scornful and impatient. Clotaire threw back his fine head with a light smile, and the group pursued their way. After treading narrow and intricate paths, they made an abrupt turn, and came in full view of a majestic and spacious marble temple, through whose windows of stained glass—stained in Tyrian dyes which far exceeded the imitations of these later ages—floods of crimson, green, purple, and golden light were streaming out on the shadows in such prodigal splendor that the old trees looked as if they were draped with rainbows. Running along the front was a spacious

colonnade, supported by light pillars, with carved base and cornice, into which the wide folding doors of the principal entrance opened. Above rose stately arches, splendid sculptures, and lofty turrets, all blending together in one grand architectural harmony. Walking to and fro the length of the tesselated marble floor of the colonnade was a noble-looking man, clad in flowing garments embroidered and clasped with gems. The fire of youth was in his large blue eyes, and the glow of life's spring-time on his cheeks, while a consciousness of innate superiority lent an imposing dignity to his aspect. His sandaled feet glistened as he walked, the straps of his sandals being wrought with precious stones, and the square cap, which declared his order, sat on his brow like a diadem.

"He is one of the princes of Munster," said their guide, in a low tone of voice, "who, being instructed by the Druids, has become a Bard."

Just then, seeing two strangers approaching, he stepped forward, and, holding out his hand, received them courteously.

"Bear witness, nobles," said the guide, "that I have conducted ye hither without bribe or reward, that I may return. This, noble strangers, is Abaris, prince and Bard of Munster."

"And we," said Clotaire of Bretagne, "are two strangers from Western Europe, who have come hither in the pursuit of knowledge. We have letters to Semo, the sage and Arch-Druid of Erin, from our fathers,—one of whom is a palatine of the great German Empire, the other, myself, a son of the Lord Count of Bretagne. For our guide we can safely say that he has performed the task assigned him in good faith and courtesy."

"It is well. He knows well how sacred are the laws of hospitality. But, noble sirs, while I bid ye welcome,

I am sorry to inform ye that Semo is now engaged in the sacred rites of the temple. A number of Druids from other provinces have met him here to consult together in matters of high import; and, it being one of the festivals of *Tienne*, he will not be at liberty to give ye audience until to-morrow," replied the bard, with grave dignity. "But follow me. We have an apartment for strangers, where ye can partake of refreshments and rest, which ye must need after so long a journey."

He conducted them through lofty passages, through spacious halls of marble, where the groined ceilings were fretted with silver and checkered with azure,-where silken draperies swept around sculptured pillars in voluminous and gorgeous folds, - where the arches, which spanned deep niches in the wall, were heavy with carvings of grotesque foliage, and filled with parchment volumes, and rolls of Egyptian and Etrurian manuscripts. In more than one apartment through which they passed, they noticed high and finely-chiseled statues of the chaste Nerf, before which, on tripods of silver, burned fires, which were tended by the neophytes of the temple, clad in robes of white and crowned with garlands of ivy. The way seemed intricate and interminable; but, as they went on, they noticed that they were winding around a circular corridor, which appeared to surround an inner temple; for, as if afar off yet quite near, and only muffled by the intervention of thick walls, they again heard those wondrous strains of music, while from small loop-holes, high up near the ceiling, sharp rays of light from within streamed across. Silently and reverently the bard conducted his guests along until they reached an arched doorway set deep in the marble wall, which he opened, and ushered them in.

"Here rest, most welcome strangers. Here are re-

freshments; here are couches; here is a harp; here are books. But pardon my absence. My post of duty is where ye found me. More strangers might arrive,—for men of all nations seek our sages to hear from them lessons of wisdom,—and it would be a gross violation of our rules for me to be absent longer than necessary," said the bard.

"Thanks, noble Abaris, for the time already bestowed on us. There is only one more favor. Be pleased to take with thee our letters of introduction to Semo," said Clotaire of Bretagne, handing him a letter written on vellum and fastened with threads of gold.

"And mine," said Ulric the Saxon, impatient and hungry. Abaris took both, and, bowing his head, folded the letters to his heart, and was gone.

"Now, Clotaire, let us be merry. There are fowls and meats of which I know not the names; here are venison, salads, white bread and wines,—oh, glorious, generous wines! See how they sparkle and dance as the light gleams through them. And, per Bacchus! the service is of gold. This Druid temple is no bad quarters, after all!" exclaimed Ulric of Heidelberg, skipping around the table and inspecting every dish with the greedy eye of a gourmand.

"This is more like the Epicureanism of Greece, than the abstemiousness for which the Druids are celebrated. We only want garlands of roses and music to make us fancy we are in Athens," laughed the young Frank, filling his goblet with sparkling wine. "Let us eat, drink, and be merry."

After satisfying the first cravings of hunger and thirst, he threw himself back on his couch and surveyed the apartment. It was lofty and beautiful. The floor was tesselated with marble of various colors, and spread here and there with soft Persian mats of brilliant dyes. Couches filled up with soft silken cushions invited repose; and silver lamps, whose flames threw up fragrant odors, hung suspended by links of silver from the ceiling.

"Look! look! Sir Saxon! look!" exclaimed Clotaire, starting up, and laying his hand on his companion's arm, as he was in the act of lifting another goblet, overflowing with wine, to his lips, while he pointed to a luminous sentence which had appeared to start out suddenly in letters of fire on the marble wall.

"THE WISE MAN SAYETH, TOUCH NOT WINE.

"BE GOVERNED NOT BY SENSUALITY, BUT BY THY NOBLE SELF."

"By Apollo! this is sham hospitality!" exclaimed the Saxon noble. "I thought we were invited to partake of these viands and refreshments?"

"I am thankful for the warning," said Clotaire. "I am refreshed, and shall eat and drink no more."

"And I shall drink another goblet of this delicious wine. By Bacchus! there is nothing in all Rhineland like it!" exclaimed Ulric of Heidelberg, drinking another draught. "Now I am so far from sleep that I feel like a young giant. I could fight a dragon, if I could only find one! Come, Sir Clotaire! let us explore beyond this, and not be mewed up like two refractory damsels on a holiday. These casements open—yes! let us see—on a narrow parapet; a goat could scarcely stand on it; but I shall go and follow it whithersoever it leads me."

"Sir Saxon! thou wouldst not be guilty of this breach of hospitality! What right have we to scale the walls of those who have received us in good faith, or explore their dwellings uninvited?" exclaimed Clotaire, in an indignant tone.

But, heated with wine, and heedless as he was bold,

Ulric stepped forth from the window, out on the parapet, and, with the agility and swiftness of a cat, glided out of sight, while the other, shocked and indignant, turned away, and once more lay down upon his couch.—The soft, subdued light, the solitude and perfect stillness around him, soothed his senses, and a deep slumber stole over him. A fair dream opened to his vision; his mother, still in the bloom of a stately beauty, was beside him; his father, in courtly attire, with a coronet on his brow, held out his hand with a proud look of joy toward him; he threw out his arm to clasp his mother, who was the idol of his life,—when, lo! a crash, a jar, aroused him, with a sense of something terrible. He sprang up. The casements had been dashed rudely open, and on the floor, ghastly and trembling, lay Ulric of Heidelberg.

"Ha! hast thou been wounded? hast thou been attacked? What means this, Sir Saxon? Rouse thee, rouse thee, and lie not there trembling like a craven, instead of a true knight," exclaimed the impetuous and noble Frank.

"This is an accursed place! Let us go hence," he replied, through his chattering teeth.

"Explain; but first rise up, and swallow some wine. I thought from thy valiant talk that there was nothing within the space of humanity that could alarm thee," said Clotaire, handing him wine.

"I defy every human power, Sir Frank; but there are terrible ones who belong to another and a blacker world, the princes of the realms of hell, whom I fear," he replied, with white lips.

"Hast thou met one of these?" inquired Clotaire, incredulously.

"Listen. - I have known an age of horror since I left thee," said the Saxon, speaking in a low tone. "It was to gratify a foolish whim which seized me at the moment; but the cool night-winds, and the difficulties which beset my progress, exhilarated and excited me: so on I went. Clambering, hanging sometimes by my nails, swinging by boughs, and creeping where a bird could scarcely stand, I got along, until suddenly a steep wall arrested my progress. It was covered with ivy of so old a growth that the branches were like cables. As I could not go on, I vowed to go up; and up I climbed,—up—up,—until a brilliant stream of light, pouring from an opening high up under the eaves, almost blinded me. But my eyes, soon accustomed to the glare, looked through, and could distinguish within and below; and, as sure as thou livest, it was the interior of the accursed Druid temple into which I gazed; and then——"

"Hast thou so far forgotten the honor of a noble, Sir Saxon, as to play the spy?" asked Clotaire, with a withering look of scorn.

"Ha! spy!" he exclaimed, touching the hilt of his dagger. "Unsay the word, Sir Clotaire of Bretagne!"

"Let thy own words disprove the charge, Sir Ulric of Hiedelberg. Go on," said the other, coolly.

"That I am no spy, then, be sure. Had I known there was an opening in the wall, had I even known that it was the wall of their temple I was scaling, I had not seen what I did. But, once up,—hanging by vines at a dizzy height from the ground, my brain fevered with wine, and the spirit of adventure rampant within me—I looked down for a moment; but, Sir Frank, it was a moment so full of horror that it is burnt in my brain forever. I saw a throne of gold and gems. It was surrounded by lamps so studded with opals that the light streamed out like sunbeams through them. White and crimson draperies of tissue covered with stars of precious

stones hung around it. On it was seated a terrible ONE of gigantic proportions, draped in cloth of gold. His face was grand and beautiful, but there was a faded glory and a curse in every lineament. Instead of a diadem of gems on his brow, there was a coronal of small white flames. Yes,—as I live,—flames! No jewels ever flickered and twined and writhed as they did. Then he lifted his hand, and I saw a glistening serpent, with eyes of flame, twining around his arm, and from the throat of the serpent issued low, sweet melodies. At the signal, a screen slid back, and Semo, followed by two others, older than himself, came into this awful presence, and, prostrating themselves, touched the pavement with their foreheads, paying him who sat on the throne homage, who uttered words I could not hear. Then there came a crash and sudden darkness, and wild music wailing up on the air, and a sound of lamentation. Half dead with fright, I returned with all the swiftness I could."

"Sir Ulric of Heidelberg, thou art sufficiently punished for thy levity. Thy head was dizzy with climbing, and, heated with wine, the light blinded and bewildered thee, and thou hast seen—a vision," said Clotaire, laughing.

"It was no vision,—no phantasy!" replied the other, sullenly, while he swallowed another draught of wine. "I only wish I was safely back at Heidelberg; for, believe me, it is little that will be battered into my brains, after what I have seen."

"Let us hope for the best," replied the gay Clotaire.
"Lie down and sleep until morning, and, my honor on it,
the bright sunshine will disperse these extraordinary
phantoms from thy affrighted brain. There are soft pillows and a wide couch. Let us sleep."

"Sleep who can!" muttered Ulric. "I shall watch.

By Pluto! I feel afraid for the first time in my life." But, notwithstanding all, he had scarcely touched the pillows, on which he had heavily thrown himself, when his nasal organs announced, in no gentle or musical tones, that he was sleeping profoundly.

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CHAPTER III.

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SEMO.

"Nobles, day is far up in the hills!"

"Pardon, O bard, the sluggishness of weary travelers," exclaimed Clotaire, who, starting from his couch, saw Abaris standing beside him.

"Nay, gentle sir, it is I who should ask pardon, for rousing thee so rudely from sleep. I was loath to do it; but Semo sends ye greeting, and is waiting in the grove without, to give ye audience," replied the bard, courteously.

"Methinks the wines of Erin give one strange dreams, sir bard," yawned the Saxon, stretching his limbs, while he shook off his slumbers.

"Our wines are generous. If used temperately, they invigorate and strengthen; if abused, they take revenge by filling the soul with phantoms from Tartarus," replied Abaris, gravely.

"It was the wine, then," began Ulric; but, silenced by a sign from Clotaire, he adroitly added, "In Rhineland, one may drink up a vintage without feeling dizzy. But I am ready to accompany thee."

Beneath an old oak-tree, whose roots had forced their way out of the earth in grotesque shapes, and were so covered with rich mosses that they looked as if they were draped with velvet, walked Semo, the Arch-Druid. Grave, solemn, and stately in his bearing, full of the dignity of learning and wisdom, and a rapt enthusiast in the doc-

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trines of a dark mythology, his appearance was imposing in the extreme.

"Welcome, young lords of Heidelberg and Bretagne,—thrice welcome. Come near me; for the cloud of age gathers over my vision, and the voice of mortals is like a far-off echo," he said, extending his hand, which the strangers touched with their lips, as they bowed the knee before him,—an act of reverence which his age and position demanded. "I knew the father of each of ye. I was the guest of the Lord Count of Bretagne, and also of the noble palatine of the Rhine, Count of Heidelberg, when I last journeyed toward the ruins of Tyre and the broken altars of Egypt. Their sons are welcome."

"We are here to learn wisdom in the schools of Erin," replied Clotaire, "and are commended to the auspices of Semo, because his fame as a sage and philosopher is known throughout Europe."

"Ay! so well is Semo known, not only for the wisdom of his age, but for the glorious achievements of his youth, that his name is written in letters of gold on a marble tablet in the hall of my ancestors at Heidelberg," said Ulric, with a proud air, while he reverently bowed his head.

"It is ever so," said the old Druid, leaning on his staff. "The Rusga-Catha* sounds sweeter in the ears of impetuous youth than the soft lays of Latona or the rapt strains of Apollo. The helm and shield, the war-horse and braying trumpet, are in his dreams of glory. In the Leabhar-Gabhaltus† he reads the scroll of destiny. But Time, like a torrent flowing down from some cloud-capped hill, sweeps all away together in an inexorable current.

^{*} War-song.

[†] Book of conquests.

Of the Danaans, who first peopled this isle, and who were conquered by our forefathers the Phænicians, a brave and fearless nation, what is left? A few broken tombs and ruined temples mark the path of the victorious invaders, while the vanquished lie forgotten beneath the waves of the sea and the sands of the shore. Fame is silent above their ashes. Their destiny is over. There is only one aim worthy of man,—virtue! Tienne, from whose glory ages cannot shear one ray, is the governing principle of Wisdom and Perfection, in the pursuit of which, man, enlightened by holy sciences, can only become a pure being, a suitable companion for Deity."

"Tell me, O sage!" said the Saxon youth, eagerly, and perhaps rudely, "has Erin no heroes? no cohorts? no battalions? no chiefs and warlike sons? Is the broad land filled with long-bearded sages and rambling bards?"

"Thy youth, O Saxon, must plead for thy ignorance," replied Semo. "While Erin, which is known throughout the world as the Sacred Isle, bows the knee to Sheanchus, the old and first cause, while the altars of sacrifice smoke with offerings to Tienne and Nerf, while the Druids in their sequestered temples keep alive the sacred fires of Religion and learning, her heroes, attended by their bards, who record on the deathless pages of Leabhar-Gabhaltus their deeds of valor, perform acts of prowess which would not shame the walls of Troy, nor lay their spears in rest until the proud invader is driven off or the aggressor subdued. Come hither, Abaris, and sing the glories of Tuathal and Fion the Brave," said the old Druid, with kindling eye.

The young bard swept his fingers over the strings of his harp, throwing out a gush of wild, warlike strains on the air. The stirring notes floated like banners over their heads, and the willing echoes sounded like the muffled tramp of hosts marching to battle, while in tones of

exquisite clearness and volume, modulated to softness or rising in grandeur, he chanted the deeds of Tuathal, who was not only terrible in war, but wise in council. "The princes and chiefs of Tara assemble. The septs come thronging down from their fastnesses in the hills and their strongholds in the valleys. They hear that the proud Roman, arrogant and flushed with conquest, threatens their wave-washed shores with invasion. He has boasted that the Eagle shall perch over the 'Sunburst,'* and that this gem of the seas shall be plucked from its possessors, to glitter in the imperial diadem, her heroes and princes be chained to Roman chariots, while her maids and matrons shall be torn from their firesides and sold into slavery. Roused to frenzy, they grasp the spear and buckle on the sword. Their arrow-points glitter in the sunlight, and every bow is strung. They rush with wild war-cries on the sleeping legions of Imperial Rome, who fly at the onset, leaving rich spoils in the hands of the victors." This was the burden of the song of Abaris, draped in poesy which we cannot imitate, and filled with eloquence so stirring that Ulric of Heidelberg grasped his dagger, and, with flashing eyes, threw his fine muscular form into an attitude of attack, while Clotaire listened breathless and eager until the bard closed his song with the wild and romantic story of Fion Mac Cumhall.

Semo waved his hand, and Abaris, gathering his mantle over his arm, retired within the recesses of the sacred grove.

"He belongs to a race of royal heroes," said the Druid,
—"heroes who bequeath with their jewels and swords a
dauntless spirit to their sons. Erin has her priests and
bards, but her defenses are the true and loyal hearts of

^{*} The banner of Ireland.

an unconquered race, who ever rush on the invader, like avenging deities."

"Pardon me," said the Saxon, with humility, "if, proud of my fatherland, I deemed it without a peer in the art of war. Let those who will, seclude themselves among the volumes and parchments of old, learning mysteries and systems which will neither give strength to the sinews nor valor to the heart: as for me, lead mc, O Semo, to some of the warlike princes of Erin, where I may practice all those glorious exercises which the valiant love."

"And thou?" said the sage, turning toward Clotaire of Bretagne.

"Think not meanly of me, O Semo, if, according to my father's wishes, I desire to learn the arts of legislation and the science of jurisprudence among a people whose code of laws is the admiration of nations. I wish the province over which I shall one day reign to be prosperous and happy: hence it is my first wish to submit myself to the wise government of the schools, that I may learn the art of governing with equity," said the young Count of Bretagne, looking down with a blush.

"Nay, thou hast no cause to blush for thy choice. I know thy people of old. They are our ancient allies; and I can declare that a dastard or a craven heart are monsters unknown in Gaul! In thy choice is no lack of true courage. He who would legislate wisely must learn the surest and happiest method of applying laws to the necessities of his people. Ye shall each, under competent teachers, be gratified. But not at once. I am on my way to the assembling of the Estates of Tara, whither it is my desire that ye accompany me. When we return, I shall be able to decide on the course to be pursued for both of ye. But come; last night ye were guests, to-day

pupils," said Semo, leading the way toward the cloisters of the temple.

In silence the strangers followed him, when, opening a low arched door, overhung densely with vines, he invited them to enter. They found themselves in a lofty, oblong hall, on each side of which were stalls, or alcoves, in each of which sat a youth, poring over volumes of parchment by the light of tapers; for every ray of daylight was jealously excluded from this abode of learning. Each one arose, saluted Semo, and, bowing courteously to the strangers, resumed his studies. The venerable Druid then led them through a narrow door into a hall of gray stone, lit but dimly by the few sun-rays that could force their way through the impenetrable foliage without, when the wind shook the leaves. Two long tables of oak extended from one end of the hall to the other. They were spread with wooden bowls, small willow baskets of cresses, loaves of brown bread, and huge flagons of frothing milk. While they stood near the upper end of the hall, the door opened, and the youths of the schools, preceded by two bards, came in, and, after offering the strangers seats of honor, sat down and began their meal in silence, while one, more advanced in learning than the rest, read an Etruscan manuscript aloud, which, being recently found beneath some Italian ruin, in a sealed vase, described the voyage of the Phœnicians and their discovery of Ireland. Clotaire modestly partook of the plain fare spread before him, and could scarcely disguise his astonishment to see the Arch-Druid, seated at the lower end of the table, listening with interest to the narrative of the adventures of these hardy mariners over the midnight seas. But Ulric of Heidelberg indignantly crumbled the brown bread on the trencher, and pushed back with a look of contempt the

crisp water-cresses, while his eyes wandered up and down in search of wine. Not one word of the precious manuscript did he hear, and he was fain, when the gnawings of hunger became insupportable, to swallow a bowlful of milk.

In a few hours afterward they were, with Semo and a party of Druids and bards, in the saddle, on their way up toward the Shannon, where between wild and craggy headlands it dashes out into the Atlantic.

"Hist! Sir Clotaire of Bretagne! how dost thou feel after thy breakfast of cresses and black bread? There is no serf in thy province but fares better."

"Feel? Better than thou, Sir Ulric, after thy ill humors at the student's fare! By Apollo! but the milk thou didst drink was not long in turning to curds in such a proud stomach!" replied Clotaire, laughing.

"Sir bard," said Ulric, turning with a sullen look to Abaris, who at that moment reined up his steed close by, "pardon a stranger, but tell me, is abstemiousness a rule of obligation in the schools of Erin?"

"Abstemiousness the most rigid. The human mind progresses but slowly without temperance and moderation. The greatest enemy to intellectual excellence is sensuality. But be of good cheer. Thou wilt soon learn to enjoy the brown bread and frothing milk, the sweet fish from our loughs, the mutton from our hill-sides."

"Mutton! oh!" ejaculated Ulric, with watering mouth.

"Sometimes, on high festivals of TIENNE and NAOM NERF, the rule is somewhat relaxed: wine and game and white bread are allowed. We always fare alike," replied Abaris, laughing.

"I hope there are many of these festivals, sir bard; for, to confess the truth, I have been used to spiced boars' meat, venison, fowls, pastries, and wines, from my boyhood up: hence this sort of fare will inevitably cause my death," said the Saxon, moodily.

"Let some less ignoble foe do that, Count Ulric; and see that thy death-wound is not in thy back," exclaimed Clotaire, with disgust.

"Count of Bretagne, dost thou dare insinuate that I would fly from a foe?" cried Ulric, fiercely, as he wheeled his horse around so suddenly that the noble animal fell back on his haunches.

"I mean that he who is afraid of black bread will surely be afraid of a stronger foe," cried Clotaire, laughing gayly.

"Semo sends for the stranger called Ulric," said an attendant, running between the two.

"Let it lie there for the present!" exclaimed the Saxon, throwing his gauntlet to the earth, while he grew white with rage; "but remember——"

"Let mine keep it company!" replied Clotaire, chafing, as he dashed his down beside it. "We will abide our time. Friends or foes, as ye choose, Sir Ulric of Heidelberg. My levity is my misfortune," he continued, turning to Abaris, who had been an interested spectator of the scene, which developed leading traits in the characters of those who had been confided to his care.

"Moderation in words is no less excellent than moderation in our appetite. But spur thy horse after me toward yonder steep. Below it lies a scene of blue hills, bright loughs, wild cascades, rocks, glens, woods, and waving fields,—a picture so beautiful that earth has not its equal, while far beyond spreads out the ocean, like a dream of heaven."

CHAPTER IV.

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Hot Issue sides of MONA.

It was a soft, dewy spring morn. There was a glory in the thin haze that hung like draperies of silver tissue over wave and shore. There was brightness on the treetops, and dashes of light on the sharp cliffs that reared their high and grotesque outlines over the rushing river, that swept with a wild and sonorous song toward the sea. The brightness was over all. It nestled down like whitewinged birds into quiet, mossy glens, flashed athwart the solitary places on the hill-sides, and shot far back into caverns where sea-birds reared their young. Flower and shrub and heath filled the air with sweetness, while the winds, riding down on the crested waves, sounded like an army with banners. High up on a rocky promontory, which hung beetling and hoary over the estuary, stood a marble temple, with noble porticoes, lofty pillars, and statues of fine proportions, which gleamed out clear and distinct against the deep blue of the sky. It was one of the temples of NERF, where, at stated periods, her mysterious rites were celebrated by Druids and vestals,vestals of the moon, who, like the Roman vestals of a later time, bound themselves by vows of the most sacred character to the observances of the service of the temple. The midnight rites were over, and the vestals were at liberty to wander through the sacred groves, or visit the caves where the sacred fires were kept burning.

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In a cavern which was almost inaccessible, and which seemed detached from the mainland, so far did it hang over the eddying and whirling tide, two vestals were reposing on the moss-grown rocks,—resting, after their fatiguing and perilous ascent. Their robes of white and silver, girdled about the waist by a zone of gems, flowed loosely around them. One was veiled, and, with her forehead leaning on her hand, was silent. The other, panting and flushed, threw back her veil for air. Far back in a sheltered niche, on a tripod of silver, burned the sacred flame, strong and bright, but fitfully, as the wind, in gentle eddies, sighed past it.

"The flame needs no feeding to-day, Dairene," said the unveiled one, bending over it. And never shone a vestal fire on a lovelier face. An exquisite regularity of features filled with expression, a complexion whose stainless purity blended with the hue of the rose, eyes large, dark, and radiant, and hair as black as the raven's wing, flowing in glossy waves far below her waist,—with neck, arms, and hands of the most statuesque form,—combined to make her a creature of rare and matchless loveliness. "And as this flame trembles and seems as if it would fly if it were not bound by unchangeable laws, so I feel ofttimes a yearning wish to escape toward something high and pure and holy,—only, Dairene, I know not how. Canst thou tell me?"

"What is higher or better, Mona, than the pursuit of virtue? And what holier state canst thou wish than the service of Nerf Naom?" replied Dairene, lifting her veil and disclosing an old but sad face. "It is a novelty, child, thou art seeking. But beware: vestals should avoid all that is foreign to their vocation."

"But oh, Dairene, I am so weary!" cried Mona, throwing herself at Dairene's feet and leaning her cheek on her knees.

"Weary, Mona? Weary of what, child?"

"Of—of—I know not what," she replied, with a gush of tears.

"A vestal of Nerf—one who will in a few days be admitted into the inner shrine of the temple—shedding tears and complaining of weariness! Why, child, thou hast done nothing to-day but put fresh garlands on the statues. A child might have done that, and not been weary," exclaimed Dairene, in undisguised amazement.

"Didst thou know my mother, Dairene?" abruptly asked Mona.

"Know her? Yes: she was my sister. But talk not of her, Mona: never more breathe her name. She was a vestal of the temple," said Dairene, with quivering lip.

"A vestal! How? Oh, dear Dairene, tell me all," besought Mona.

"It is too horrible for thee to hear, child. And, moreover, if Semo should know that I ever spoke to thee of thy mother——Hush, child! I fear to speak."

"Nay, Dairene, Semo can never know it. Tell me. If thou dost not, I will ask Semo," said Mona, with a firm and resolute tone and manner.

"NERF NAOM! Ask Semo! Child, such a question would be death. But, if thou wilt hear the story, listen," said Dairene, pale and agitated.

"Thanks, dear Dairene," said Mona, gently, while she wound her arm caressingly around her. "Now go on."

"Thy mother," whispered Dairene, "was a vestal of yonder temple. She broke her vows. She disappeared,—no one knew when or how. It was only known that she went in to keep vigils before the shrine, and never was seen afterward: then horrible things were whispered, and all was mystery. But one bright morn a little babe was brought and laid among the lotus-flowers and roses

which we had gathered and thrown in heaps on the floor of the vestibule of the temple, to make garlands for the statues. None knew whence it came; but I, more curious than the rest, found in a corner of the robe that was folded about the little one the name of 'Ioline,' traced in blood. Searching along the embroidered margin, I discovered another clue in these words:—'This night I die.' I knew all then. She was the solitary flower of my life; I had loved her,—oh, Mona, thou canst never conceive the love I bore that faithless one; but, child, she had stained the honor of her caste, she had polluted the dignity of the temple, and had Semo ordered me to sheathe the knife in her heart I should have done it,—yes, O Ioline, I must have done it,—and died.

"That night the Druids wanted a spotless victim for the rites, and the babe, they said, was a waif which had been sent by the gods. Messengers came and lifted it from the couch where it was sleeping, and bore it away. I heard its frightened wail as they rushed through the long, cold passages with it. Then I folded up my heart like a withered thing, watered neither with tears nor feeling, and thrust it far back under the shrine of memory; for I was a vestal of Nerf, and what were these weak human emotions to me?

"But the child was spared. It was said that when Semo was about to plunge the sacrificial knife in its throat it stretched out its hands to him, and smiled. He sent it away, and offered a young lamb in its stead."

"What became of the babe, then?" asked Mona, whiter than the lilies on her bosom.

"It was reared in the temple. She is now a vestal of Nerf."

"And the child's mother?" said Mona, shivering.

"Nothing certain was ever heard. We only know

that, if a vestal of Nerf violates her vows, a horrible fate awaits her," said Dairene, sadly.

"And I am the child of that mother who perished in mystery?"

"Thou art! thou art!—child of my loved and lost Ioline!"

Mona bowed her head on her knees, while her black tresses fell like a mourning veil around her, and wept bitterly. Dairene, silent and sad, looked out over the foaming estuary toward the bright ocean, where thousands of white-winged sea-birds were glancing in the sunshine or skimming the rolling billow. The spray that dashed up against the cliffs was not colder or more briny than the tears that dripped over her faded cheeks.

"I dreamed of her last vigil. I thought at first it was Nerf Naom; but now I know it was my mother," said Mona, at last.

"How canst thou tell?" asked Dairene.

"Was she not tall and slender as the mountain-ash? Did not her hair, brown and soft, fall, waving over a brow of snow, to her very feet? Were not her eyes large and black, like those of a timid fawn? And her voice—oh, Dairene! was there a voice in all Erin like it? Oh, I know—I know it was my mother!" exclaimed Mona, clasping her hands.

"Tell me thy dream," said Dairene, mournfully.

"It was three nights ago. The horns of the moon tapered toward the zenith, and I was crowned with poppies, and conducted by the vestals to the anteroom of the inner shrine, to keep vigils preparatory to my initiation. All was silent and solemn. The statues of LATONA and Nerf, as the pale moonlight shone down through the narrow windows on them, seemed full of life: their heads bent toward me, their arms were opened as if to embrace

me. A great awe fell on me, -an awe like that which comes with a shadow and touches the heart with ice. While I sat thus, silent and breathless, low, sweet music stole on my ears: the soft strains filled the air like the fanning of beautiful wings. It was nothing earthly, Dairene. Then the door-that door studded with pearls and emeralds-of the inner shrine, where none but the initiated enter, opened noiselessly, and a pale and beautiful one, draped in white and silver tissue, came out and glided toward me. There was no sound of rustling robes; but whenever her feet touched the floor it looked as if she trod in moonlit water. Almost dead with fright, I could not remove my eyes from hers, as she approached me; but, when she stooped over and kissed my forehead with lips like those corals which are brought from Indian seas, a warm thrill coursed down to my heart, filling it with ineffable calm.

"'Follow me, Mona,' said the white-robed one. 'Follow me, child of my bosom.'

"She took my hand and raised me up. Then out of the temple, on—over the crags, through the forests, along over strange moors, through fairy raths, along steep hill-sides and deep glens and dreary wilds, we sped, until we came to a sea,—a leaden sea, whose waters rolled in great sullen billows and floated up without a sound on the shore. Beyond, we could see dark clouds, through which flashed incessantly lurid and ghastly lights, hanging low down along the horizon, which chased each other with solemn murmurs, like ghosts of the mighty slain. On—on—on toward the leaden sea we sped.

"'I dare not go with thee, strange and loving one,' I said, shrinking back.

"'Fear not,' said the white-robed one, gathering me close to her bosom. 'Those billows, which seem so terrible, will not harm thee.'

"Then on we sped again,—over the dark sea,—gliding with a swift and easy motion, like a sea-bird when it floats on the wind-tide, until we reached the shore over which hung the gloomy clouds. It was a shore of solemn twilight, where lotus-flowers nodded to the waves and the long rank sedges moaned to the sighing winds. All was silent; only now and then a voice of lamentation, swelling on the air, reached our ears. Then I saw processions, and groups, and solitary ones,—sages, kings, philosophers, and poets, all earth-born,—glide past; and the only sound they uttered was a wailing cry of 'How long? how long?' Pale lights flickered over the shore while they passed onward, still crying, 'How long? how long?'"

"Mona, thy dream, if dream it was, is strange and mysterious," said Dairene.

"We paused not long on this darksome shore, but sped away over heights precipitous and grand, above which the clouds were tipped with gold,—through vales of beauty and flowers, where strange and glorious beings wandered, who, turning to salute us as we passed, inquired if we were earth-born, then went on their way, also sighing, 'How long? how long?'

"'For what are they sighing?' I asked.

"'For deliverance, which will come to them through One ye know not of.'

"Then on we sped, until a deep, broad gulf lay before us. No eye could fathom its depths; we could only hear the roar of sluggish waters far below; but beyond it, resting on its marge, was a rim of light, so glorious and splendid that no mortal eye could bear its rays. Above it hung a rack of wild, black clouds, so heavy and motionless that I thought they were a range of bleak granite hills.

"'It is the dawn,' said my guide,—'the dawn of deliverance.'

"Then, gathering me again to her bosom, we sped over the abyss, under the barrier of cloud, into a region so full of light and loveliness, where creatures of such perfect and glorious beauty were passing to and fro to the sound of harmonies indescribable, that I fell prostrate, adoring and loving the source of such mystic splendor. And yet we were only on the suburbs of this celestial land. There our journey ended, my guide had whispered. While, filled with silent ecstasy, I lay with my forehead to the earth, I heard one say, 'Arise!' I lifted my head, and, lo! coming toward me I beheld ONE of marvelous and divine majesty, whose eyes, filled with pity and tenderness, looked on me. He seemed to be a royal personage, or perhaps the ruler of the land; for, as he passed along, all bowed, and paid him homage, with songs of adoration which I could not understand. And yet, O Dairene, instead of a jeweled crown He wore a coronal of wounds, from which shot forth celestial glories, while from His outspread hands dropped blood like a fountain, which seemed to fall in showers of gold to the earth, making the waste places glad and the barren spots to rejoice. And I saw that His feet had been pierced; and, as the wind lifted His robe, I saw an open wound in His left side, through which I saw a vision of multitudes who had sought shelter there. He plucked a palmbranch and laid it in my hands. Then the vision faded. Methought I was in a cavern, into which the sea was dashing with a horrible roar. I was pursued by phantoms arrayed like Druids, who led on wolf-dogs to devour me. I looked toward the temple. It was blazing; while NERF NAOM descended from her pedestal and seized a burning brand and rushed toward me, leading on my foes; but the waves kept them at bay. When, filled with anguish and terror, I awoke, I was lying on

the broad marble step of the pedestal on which stands the statue of Latona, with the bright sunshine around me."

Mona ceased speaking, and covered her face with her veil.

"Strange things have happened in the temple, Mona, even in my day," said Dairene,—"things so strange and terrible in their auguries that I dare not speak of them. But it is no harm to tell legends. The older vestals talk of them; and it is even said that Semo trembles when they are told; but I don't know."

"What are those legends, Dairene?" asked Mona, in a voice of deep interest.

"I will tell thee one,-the one which is recorded in the Sheancus-More.* Once, when the Baal-fire was blazing upon the plains of Tara, and the high mysteries of TIENNE were being celebrated with great pomp and splendor, when the Druids, and bards, and kings, and princes, and nobles, all in their magnificent robes, marched into the sacred grove to assist in the solemnities, a sudden darkness overspread the earth; the sacred fire was extinguished, the ground shook, and there was a sound in the air like the roaring of wind and wave. Priests and people fled together in wild affright to the open plains, expecting every instant the destruction of Nature. But at last the darkness dispersed, Nature once more smiled serenely; and the multitude, still pale and trembling with an unknown horror, resumed each one his station and duty. After consultation in the great hall of Tara with the Druids, the king directed the Arch-Druid to go to the temple and consult the oracle and ascertain the meaning of this elemental disturbance.

"It was done; and, while the multitude without were

^{*} Psalter of Tara.

waiting in breathless anxiety and awe for the answer, the Arch-Druid appeared on the portico of the temple. His face was whiter than his hair, and his voice, usually loud and sweet, was piping and tremulous, as he imparted to the assembly the decree of the oracle.

"'In the country of the Jews,' he began, 'they are putfing to death the Son of God, their king, who came to reign over them and bring salvation to the nations.'

"Then a cry of horror filled the air; the people beat their breasts and tore their hair when the Deicide was announced to them. They felt that a malediction was over the earth. The King of Ulster, in his rage, rushed through the sacred grove, hewing and hacking the trees, and rallying his knights of the Red Branch around him, to march to the kingdom of the Jews and avenge the death of a God.*

"But, while marshaling his knights in order and denouncing the Jews, an old wound in his head opened, and he fell dead."

"A glorious death! But, Dairene, who is God? And why should Jesus Christ His Son die? Is not a God powerful and mighty? Does it mean Tienne, Dairene?" asked Mona, anxiously.

"I can tell thee no more, Mona. That is the legend; but I have heard," she whispered, looking fearfully around her, "that since then the oracles have been dumb."

"Let us go, Dairene! This is a fearful thing. He must be a mighty one to whose power the oracles submit," said Mona, going toward the mouth of the cave, and shading her eyes with her hands as she looked in the direction of the temple. "I see a cavalcade winding up the steep leading to the temple."

"It is Semo. Come away!" cried Dairene, gathering her veil around her.

CHAPTER V.

THE ALTAR AT MIDNIGHT.

THE day before the cavalcade of Druids and bards arrived at the temple of Nerf, toward sunset, Ulric of Heidelberg and Clotaire of Bretagne, apparently on friendly terms, had wandered away from the haltingplace, arm in arm, as the others thought, to explore the fair and romantic scenes which stretched out on every side around them. But, heedless of gold-tinted trees, or of purple rocks where rich vines flaunted their gay yellow flowers, they followed in silence a narrow wolf-track, which led them down into a deep and narrow glen, where, throwing off their embroidered togas and drawing their keen Saracen blades, they prepared for deadly conflict. After a few passes, the lithe and graceful Clotaire, who was accomplished in the use of arms, gained such an anvantage over the blundering Saxon, who plunged and beat the earth and air like a wild bull, that, after inflicting a flesh-wound on his thigh, he, by a skillful sleight of hand, disarmed him, and, pressing him back against the rocks, held him completely at his mercy.

"Thou art fairly vanquished," said Clotaire. "In good faith, and according to the laws of chivalry."

"Vanquished? Yes! As to fairness, if the sun had not slanted into my eyes and blinded me, thou wouldst have naught to boast of," replied Ulric, sullenly.

"It is thy right, sir count, to claim another trial, if

thou art not satisfied. I am at thy service," said the other, proudly.

"To give thee another advantage to boast over? It is, methinks, no proof of chivalry to offer fight to a wounded man!"

"Nay, Count of Heidelberg, I am no boaster. I forgot thy scratch. Here; take thy cimetar, and let us be friends," said Clotaire, holding out his hand.

"Thou hast vanquished twice, sir count. Thou wilt forget my disgrace more readily than I; but I accept thy gage," was the Saxon's reply to the noble and chivalrous forbearance of his adversary.

Ere they reached the temple the following day, the young Count of Heidelberg had apparently forgotten the quarrel and encounter of the evening before; while Clotaire, in his frank and joyous nature, rejoiced that the animosity which he had provoked by his sarcasms was so short-lived. Indeed, he frequently reproached himself for his levity, and behaved with more courtesy to his companion, nor meddled again with his peculiarities. But deep down in that Saxon heart, like a bolt that has sped into a burning crater, glowed the insult which he had not the courage either to forgive or to avenge; and he only, with crafty pretense, bided his time, to inflict a deadly blow on the head of him who had stung him. But he evinced no outward signs of his jealous hatred, and those who merely looked on the surface thought they beheld in the intercourse of the two a renewal of the friendship of Castor and Pollux.

"There is good news for us to-day, sir count," said Ulric to Clotaire, who was loitering along the picturesque shore. "I have been seeking thee in every direction for an hour past."

"News from home?" said Clotaire, eagerly, lifting his bright, expectant face.

"If the winds could talk, we might have news from home. No. But it will please thee—even thee—well to hear it," replied Ulric.

"Had I wine, I would offer a libation beforehand for it," said Clotaire, laughing. "As it is, I will pour water on the sands in token of my thanksgiving to the gods for good tidings." And he dipped his hand in a small pool at his feet, and, with a graceful gesture, threw the clear water from the hollow of his hand on the earth. "Now for thy news."

"Thou dost know that Abaris, the bard, is of the royal house of this province of Munster. The stronghold on yonder height belongs to his father, and is governed by his brother, the royal heir, who sends us greeting, and an invitation to a wolf-hunt and feast to-day."

"I will not quarrel with thy news; for, in sooth, it stirs up the blood in my veins to hear of a hunt once more," exclaimed Clotaire, with flashing eyes. "But Semo! what sayeth Semo?"

"Intent on the rites of the temple, he consents to our going under the protection of Abaris, who, you know, is not a Druid, but as gallant a bard as ever touched harp or falchion. But here he comes in search of us."

"We must speed without delay to Innistore, nobles," said Abaris. "The Clana Doagha* are assembled, and wait our coming: the beagles are unleashed, and the wolf-dogs howl to be on the scent of the quarry," said the noble bard.

"But our weapons? We have no weapons, noble Abaris," said Clotaire.

"Weapons? Targe, shield, and spear are in the halls of Innistore. Our steeds paw the earth and champ

^{*} The Knights of Munster.

their bits beyond the temple walls. They snuff the chase, and are impatient to be gone."

And with fleet steps the three sprang up the steep rocky paths leading to the temple, and, almost breathless with eagerness and haste, leaped into their saddles, and coursed like the winds toward the stronghold of Innistore.

Under the massive arch of the great portal of Innistore stood the noble and handsome Prince of Munster, waiting to be the first to offer welcome greeting to his stranger guests. A knight of the Golden Collar,—an order conferred only on those of royal descent,-he wore his honors bravely. His large blue eyes and yellow hair, his cheeks glowing with health and manly exercises, his broad shoulders and fine athletic figure and noble air, made him a fine type of the higher classes of his countrymen. His finely-proportioned limbs were covered closely with purple cloth. A braccon, or vest, of saffron-colored silk, fastened with large emeralds set in gold, covered his breast; while the close sleeves of a flowing mantle of some fine and glossy fabric gave him all the advantages he could desire in the use of his arms. Over the whole was thrown a fallung, or cloak, of ample dimensions, which, after he had received his guests, was taken away by an attendant. Arm in arm with the young Count of Bretagne, and followed by Abaris and the Saxon, he led the way into the great hall of Innistore, where tables loaded with viands of every description, and wines from every clime flashing in the light, were spread beneath banners and other trophies of victories of the past. Knights and squires and mail-clad men were standing in gay groups through the hall: there was an animated hum of voices, the inspiring music of harps, the rattle and ring of arms, and a general hum of expectancy and pleasure.

But there was a hush when the prince entered with his guests,—a hush which lasted only long enough for him to introduce them to the company; then uprose such a clamor of greeting and welcome that, alarmed, Ulric of Heidelberg, with his eyes fixed on the great smoking rounds of venison, laid his hand on the hilt of his dagger, while Clotaire, overjoyed to be once more among his peers in age and rank, gave himself up to the excitement of the hour, and won his way to every heart by his frank and noble demeanor.

After the feast began the chase, over hill and dale, over moor and brae, until the echoes rang with the shouts of the hunters and the baying of their hounds.

As the sounds grew fainter in the distance, the vestals of the temple, released from their tasks, sought the shade and shelter of the sacred grove, to enjoy an hour of relaxation in innocent sports and converse. Far down, where the wood skirted the shore, Mona, pensive and alone, was wandering. Her mood was mystical and dreamy; and, to avoid the merriment and light-hearted jests of her companions the vestals, she had stolen away, and ran she knew not whither, until, reaching a little knoll, she saw through a narrow vista the distant ocean gleaming in the sunshine. All was silent there, except those sweet sounds which tranquillize the soul in solitude. The moan of the ocean, the chirp of birds over their new-made nests, the soft rustling of leaves as the wind stole through the branches, made low, sweet music; and Mona, tired and spent, threw herself down on the budding moss, where, vielding to the influence of the scene, a tranquil but unutterable sadness stole over her. Her dream haunted her; Dairene's legend troubled her: she felt that she was on the eve of some wonderful event, which threw its shadow over her soul. Suddenly there was a crashing

of branches near her, and, starting round, she beheld a savage wolf, with red eyeballs and frothing mouth, fixing himself couchant for a spring toward her. With a wild cry of alarm, she sprang up, and, leaning backward against a tree, clasped her hands on her breast, defenseless, and fearing to breathe or move, lest she should feel those deadly fangs fastening in her throat. Her veil was thrown back, and her hair, bursting the gemmed fillet that confined it, fell in wild disorder around her. face was white and ghastly, yet, with its expression of deadly anguish, was surpassingly beautiful. The wolf glared on her, sure of his prey. She closed her eyes. He leaped toward her; but, ere he reached her, a spear, aimed with unerring skill, had penetrated the side of his head and cleft his skull. Mona fell senseless to the earth, and her deliverer, rushing forward, lifted her in his arms and bore her rapidly along until he reached a thread-like tarn that rippled down over the rocks into the mossy pool blow.

Never before had Clotaire of Bretagne seen loveliness so rare and perfect; never before had the sight of woman inspired him with such tenderness. He touched her face lightly and reverently, as he threw back her hair to lave her forehead. He could not tell why, but to gaze on those beautiful and motionless features made him feel almost guilty of sacrilege. He held his hand under the waterfall, and was in the act of sprinkling Mona's face again, when a hand was laid heavily on his shoulder, and a voice, in accents of alarm, whispered,—

"Fly! My brother Abaris approaches! She is a vestal of Nerf."

It was the Prince of Munster who spoke the warning. Ulric of Heidelberg was with him, gazing down with a rude and triumphant expression on the insenible Mona.

"I may not leave her thus, be she what she may," cried Clotaire, gathering the folds of her veil over her face. "I have just rescued her from the fangs of a ferocious wolf."

"This is madness, sir count. It would destroy her to be found thus. Ha! she revives!"

Mona opened her eyes, and, finding herself leaning on the bosom of a stranger and surrounded by knights, she uttered a low cry, and, covering her face with her hands, sprang away, and was soon lost to view in the overhanging gloom of the woods. By this time the wolf-dogs had found the carcass of the savage beast they had been chasing all day, which, with loud yelping and deepmouthed cries, they tore and tossed. On Mona sped,up the cliffs, along the narrow footpaths skirting the sea, until she reached a range of high overhanging rocks which jutted out, a picturesque headland, into the frothing surges. Drenched with spray, on she went, over the jagged rocks and slippery ways, until the startled seabirds flew shrieking and circling around her, -until the wild weird commotion of the surf beating on the cliffs and rushing up into the narrow caverns which indented the shore shut out the echo of the deep-mouthed baying of the dogs and the shouts of the hunters. Then she paused, gasping, panting, and trembling, and looked eagerly around for a place of shelter, when she espied near her a narrow opening, which seemed to lead far back into a deep and irregular cavern. Into it she crept, and, to her great joy, saw, far back, a lamp burning in a niche, which threw a pale light around. Going toward it, she discovered a nook in the wall of the cavern, heaped up with dried leaves and moss, on which she threw herself, exhausted and fainting, and soon a soft slumber stole over her. She did not know how long she had

slept, when she was aroused by voices speaking near her in low, muffled tones. Scarcely breathing, she listened.

"It is nearly midnight, and they are not here yet."

"If the tide is not too high, they will surely come."

Then Mona heard no more for an instant or two, for the wind roared through the cavern, filling it with spray. Then, as it subsided, she heard the words "sacrifice," "polluted," and "death;" and, folding her hands over her bosom, she thought of her mother, and prepared to die, feeling assured that those who were speaking were emissaries of the Druids, who had tracked her hither for terrible and mysterious purposes. They spoke again.

"I will wait a few moments longer. Arrange the altar-stone, and place the tapers on it. I will uncover the crucifix and sacred vessels."

"Oh," thought Mona, wringing her hands, "what horrible fate awaits me? I dare not speak. All is mystery! Oh, hapless Mona! Oh, faithless vestal!"

"I hear them coming! Hark! one,—two,—three! There are four of them," said one.

"Welcome, my children!" said the other, who now came forward a little, in full view of the trembling Mona, who saw, as she crouched farther back, that he was a venerable stranger, of noble and benign aspect; and while those who approached him—a woman, a youth, and two men, all closely muffled—knelt at his feet, he spread his hands over them, saying, "May He whom ye have to adore be thy reward!"

"The holy names be glorified forever!" said one of the men; "but we had danger and death to grapple with on our way. The Druids and people are out searching for one of the vestals of yonder temple, who, it is feared, has been lured off by a demon. Some say they saw a Ban-

shee flying over the rocks at sunset; but we, who cared little for the clamor, pretended to join the search for the protection of our lives, and finally reached here in safety, thanks be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!" continued the man, reverently crossing himself.

"Awful words! What mean they?" gasped Mona, shuddering. "Oh that day-dawn would come, that I might return to Dairene!"

"We have brought our son Cormac to receive the waters of baptism, which thou, holy Finian,* hast promised he shall receive to-night," said the woman.

"Dost thou believe, Cormac, in God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth?" said the venerable man, turning to the youth who stood modestly before him.

"I believe," was the response.

"Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, His divine Son, who, coequal with the Father, was born for our redemption and died for our salvation, and who, rising from the dead, ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of the Father, He liveth to make intercession for us?"

"I believe," answered the lad, earnestly.

"Dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who together with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,—the third person of the adorable Trinity?"

"I believe."

"It is well, O beloved son, that our God has in his infinite mercy blessed thee with the gift of faith! When the holy mysteries are celebrated, and the others receive the bread of eternal life, I will pour on thy head the sacred waters of regeneration, which will make thee one with us in the household of Faith," said the holy man,

^{*} St. Finian, one of the precursors of St. Patrick.

turning toward the rude altar, which was now arranged in order for the celebration of the holy mysteries. On it, and leaning against the dark-gray walls of the cave, was an ivory crucifix, before which stood a chalice and paten of gold, covered with a rich veil of silk fringed with pearls, and four lighted tapers of wax, whose sharp rays falling on the ivory Christ revealed all the awful beauty of its chiseled agony.

"It is He!" whispered Mona. "It is He! Those outstretched hands,—those wounds,—that awful crown! O Unknown! O lovely and sorrowful One, save me!"

Then, silent and awe-struck, the poor vestal folded her hands over her bosom, and watched with eager, burning eyes the celebration of the divine mysteries. From her niche she saw it all, but could hear nothing; for the tide was up, and the surf was foaming through the abysses and rents below, with a deafening roar. When the holy Finian, adoring, elevated the stainless Host, beneath whose mystic veil the humanity, the divinity, and the unmeasurable love of a God are hidden,-when those present bowed their heads to the rocky pavement to pay Him homage,—a sense of the presence of a mighty power overshadowed Mona's heart. Her dream, and all that Dairene had told her,—the legend,—the holy name of God,—the death of Jesus Christ,—all seemed blended together with this midnight mystery. She could not define her sensations: the Spirit of God was breathing over the darkened waters of her soul, but she knew not what it was: she only felt that henceforth the temple, the sacred fires, NERF, and the Druids were less than nothing to her,—that there was a higher and a diviner Truth, which she must find,—that the Deliverer of whom she had dreamed, and the Christ of whom she had heard, were

one and the same being, whom not to know was eternal loss.

"They will leave me here in darkness, and will perhaps never return again; or I may be discovered by the emissaries of Semo and die in my ignorance," whispered Mona, as she saw the venerable Finian turning to leave the altar. "O life! what art thou, compared to the joys of the celestial realms of the Deliverer? Rather lose all—life itself—than such glorious hope!" And, obeying the supernatural impulse that governed her, she glided forward, downcast and trembling, and fell at the feet of Finian, imploring his compassion.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE VESTAL OF CHRIST.

"SHE is a vestal!—one of the vestals of NERF!" exclaimed one of the men, starting back with a look of horror.

"Who art thou, and what dost thou here, poor child?" asked the good Finian, in a gentle and compassionate voice.

"I am Mona the vestal. I was pursued by a ferocious wolf, and fell into the hands of strange men, from whom I escaped and fled hither for safety," she replied, meekly.

"She will betray us to the Druids! Let her perish, O Finian! Better that one pagan should die than that scores of Christians be destroyed," exclaimed the man.

"Better, O my son, that a score of Christians receive the crown of martyrdom than that one soul should perish," replied the saintly Finian, pointing to the crucifix. "Remember Him who, betrayed by one of His own household, insulted and abused by His foes, expired in cruel torments on the ignominious cross for the love of us, who knew Him not. Let us imitate His divine example, and count all things—even life itself—as nothing for His dear sake! We will protect thee, trembling one, and return thee in safety to thy home."

"I have no home. All that I have seen and heard tonight makes me an outcast from you temple which was my home. But who are ye, who would suffer death for me so willingly?" said Mona, amazed at the noble sentiments she had heard.

"We are Christians," replied Finian.

"What is that? Do ye worship Tienne and Nerf?"

"We worship ONE who is mightier and holier than Tienne,—God, the Creator of heaven and earth. Tienne is only the element of His power, the creation of His hands, who, if He so willed it, could be darkened and hurled away from the face of the heavens forever. Nerf is one of His lesser creations, subject also to Him, who is the Supreme Lord of all!"

"A mighty God!" whispered Mona, with awe. "A mighty God! And He whom ye were adoring, whose bowed head and outstretched arms and wounded side bespeak some great sorrow,—who is He?"

"The Son of God, who, to save mortals from the wrath of perdition which their dark ingratitude and sins merited, took on Himself the form of man, and tasted of suffering and death for their deliverance. A man of sorrows, and afflicted with griefs, He became our brother, making all who believe co-heirs with Him of the kingdom of heaven."

"The Deliverer! Oh, noble,—oh, generous,—oh, divine act! Cannot I also believe and adore Him?" she asked, eagerly.

"Not if thou dost worship false deities and place faith in demons; for such are the oracles on whose revelations thy priests rely. Our God is a jealous God, and will have no other gods before Him," replied Finian.

"I spurn all that is false, O holy man! Why should I worship the untrue? Let me do homage only to the true and living God," said Mona, with simplicity and earnestness.

"Thou art ignorant, poor child, of the dreadful doom

that awaits thee if it is discovered by the Druids that thou hast forsaken the worship of the temple to become a Christian. Torments, and a slow, lingering death by fire, amid diabolical rites, would be the penalty of thy offense. What sayest thou now?" asked the good Finian, while all listened breathless for her answer.

"I could but die," said Mona, while her dark eyes brightened, and a smile lit up her face like a glory,—"I could but die for the love of Him who died for me."

"Blessed art thou, O child, in thus receiving from Almighty God the supernatural gift of faith! Blessed art thou in being willing to suffer stripes and death for the love of Jesus Christ!" cried the holy Finian, spreading his hands over Mona's head. "To-morrow seek me here; and, after instructing thee, I will give thee Holy Baptism, without which no man shall see God. Afterward thou shalt learn all the mysteries of our holy faith,—a faith whose fruition is immortal life and an eternal perfection of bliss."

"I know not how to thank thee. A new world opens around me, through which I see, dimly, fair visions like those I beheld in my dream," said Mona, in a low and gentle tone. "But whither shall I go? Except the temple, I have no home on earth. Shall I abide here?"

"Here, poor child? On this barren and deserted rock?" asked Finian.

"I fear not solitude. Except this, I have no shelter on earth."

"We come hither at stated times to celebrate the holy mysteries and administer the divine rites of our faith; otherwise it is lone and deserted."

"Lady," said the mother of the boy who was to receive baptism, "I am a poor fisherman's wife, used to hardship and danger, and, if thou wilt, can remain here with thee. My son shall bring us provisions and keep guard about us until a better place is provided for one so gentle and fair."

"Thanks, mother," said Mona, humbly kissing the rough hand of Lena, the fisherman's wife; "thanks!"

"Thy wit is ever ready, Lena," said her husband. "I, like the pagan I used to be, was for throwing the dark eyed maiden over the cliffs into the sea, fearing for our lives; but thou—ah, thou dost know how to be a Christian indeed. Thou wilt bring blessings on my poor roof."

"Silence, Stephen!" she said, with a smile: "thou dost forget the orphan sons of him who was thy foe, who now live, fed and cherished beside thy hearth! It is true, father: they were left bare and homeless, and Stephen brought them in his arms, wrapped in his fallung, and, in the name of Christ, bade me be a mother to them."

"God's blessing be on ye both, my children! Go on: emulate the virtues of the saints, and in this holy strife keep the soul's eye fixed singly on Christ Jesus, who will be your exceeding great reward. Take care, good Lena, of this the wandering lamb of His fold, who sighs to enter the peaceful pastures of which He is the Shepherd. It was a happy thought, and a courageous one, to remain with the maiden. Now, Cormac, art thou ready to receive holy baptism?"

"Yes, father, I am ready," replied the boy, coming forward.

Then all gathered around the saintly man, while he administered the sacrament of baptism to the youth, explaining, as he proceeded, every part of the solemnity, until it was over and Cormac was declared to be a son of the Church. "These life-giving waters have erased the stain of the fall; thy soul, purified and regenerated now, is

clothed in a white garment, which see, O son, that thou carry unspotted to the judgment-seat of Christ." Then the little band knelt down, while he gave them his blessing, after which they dispersed, leaving Mona and Lena alone in the cavern.

"Rest thee, lady," said Lena, shaking up the moss and spreading her gray cloak over it. "Try and sleep. I will watch beside thee till morning."

But, like a tremulous lily swayed to and fro by a soft wind, Mona's soul, full of new and holy thoughts, could not rest: there was no repose for it. One moment, like the flower, it was lifted upward, then in its weakness and sweet humility bowed earthward; now it turned to the shadow, now to the sunshine, but all the time diffusing fragrance which floated upward to its newly-discovered Lord in praise and thanksgiving.

"What is baptism, Lena, and what the stain of which the holy man spake?"

"Gentle lady, I am poor and unlearned, and fear I cannot in my humble language make plain my meaning," replied Lena, with humility.

"Thou art not so ignorant, O Christian, as I! Until this hour I have been in darkness. Then tell me what I ask, concerning that stain which only the waters of baptism can erase," said Mona, gently.

"That stain, noble lady, means the pollution of our natural state. When the great God created heaven and earth, He created man, a pure being, in His own image and likeness, and also a woman, unsullied and innocent, a companion for the man. The delights of the new earth were theirs,—communion with God and companionship with angels. They daily walked with the fair sons of God, and held the scepter of dominion over the realms in which He placed them. But the great foe of God and

man-the devil-gained entrance into that kingdom of peace, and tempted those favored ones, the father and mother of our race, to an act of disobedience; and, transgressing the law of their Creator, they fell from their pure state, brought sin and death into the world, and closed the celestial gates of heaven. Driven from the glorious home of their innocence, the guilty pair wandered forth into a bleak and barren world, repentant, and practicing the works of penance in labors and suffering. all creation groaned and travailed for deliverance. race of man, which had multiplied on the earth, walked in the shadow of death and withered under the malediction of the Most High, until, moved to pity, He so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son to die for our He came,—Jesus the Deliverer. He opened a fountain of living waters, in which the soul may be cleansed from the pollution of the fall. He instituted a Divine faith and Divine sacraments. He died for our salvation, and, rising again from the dead, ascended to heaven, where He liveth to make intercession for us; and as He entered into His heavenly kingdom He left wide open the celestial gates for all to enter in who believe."

"I believe!" said Mona, with clasped hands, while the remembrance of her dream in the temple flashed over her. "Canst thou pour these purifying waters over me?"

"Not I,—oh, no, lady! It is only those who have Divine authority to administer the holy sacraments who can do it. In case thou wert dying, and no help at hand, then it would be lawful; but not now."

"Dost thou know," said Mona, laying her small white hand on Lena's cheek, where it lay like a snow-flake,—"dost thou know that I feel within me a new life,—a something grand and beautiful, which rises up, and up, and up, until, lost in starry realms, I hear strains of deli-

cious music, and see forms of light, like white birds with the sunshine on their wings, flash by me? What is it?"

"It is thy soul aspiring after immortality. But hark! What sounds are those, lady?" said Lena, starting up, and creeping toward the mouth of the cave, whither Mona followed her. Looking down along the shore, they saw crowds of men, who held aloft blazing torches, hurrying to and fro, peering among the crevices and rocks, and skirting the border of the woods, in search of something lost. Loud shouts mingled with the wild howl of the unleashed beagles, who coursed up and down, tearing and tossing the sands, in search of the trail, which at a certain point the surf had washed out. As they came nearer, she heard them shouting, "Mona! Mona! Mona! where art thou?" and saw Semo, his white hair floating on the wind, almost frantic, directing the search here and there.

"They seek me!" said Mona, sadly.

"And should they find thee, lady, what wouldst thou say?"

"I would say, I am no longer a vestal of Nerf, but a vestal of Christ," she replied, firmly. "But see!—see!—they come nearer: they will find their way into the cavern. I cannot die without baptism. Behold! they turn their footsteps hither. Quick! quick, Lena!" she cried, in tones of anguish.

"O God! if it be for Thy glory and our salvation, save us, Thy weak servants, in this hour of peril, and forgive the meanest of Thy little ones if, in the moment of tribulation and death, she pours the waters of regeneration on this child, who wishes to belong to Thy kingdom," said the holy woman, lifting her eyes to heaven. Then, stooping down, she scooped up a handful of water from a hollow in the rock, and was about pouring it on

Mona's head, who knelt, meekly and pale, at her feet, when suddenly the clamor ceased, the beagles were off on a false scent, and, coursing down into the woods, were followed by Semo and the yeomen of the temple, and the shore was left dark and lonely, with no sound to disturb the solitude but the eternal moan of the restless sea.

The next day was dark and lowering. A fine rain driven by easterly winds added to the chilly and gloomy aspect without. Within the temple all was silent and dismal. In a lofty apartment, lighted only by the sacred fires burning with blue and flickering gleams on their silver tripods, sat Semo, in a chair of gray stone, beneath a canopy of black marble elaborately carved in foliage interspersed with faces of unearthly grotesqueness. His head was sunk on his bosom, while his dark robe, on which were embroidered in gold and jewels the signs of the zodiac, was folded over the lower part of his face, leaving visible only his broad forehead and deep-set eyes, which gleamed out from the shadow of his brow like living coals. Before him stood the young Counts of Bretagne and Heidelberg, with Abaris the bard.

"Clotaire of Bretagne, if thou wert not a stranger who came hither in good faith to study in our schools,—if thou hadst any other plea than ignorance of the sacred laws of Erin,—this day would be thy last," said Semo, slowly. "But I believe thy story, albeit it differs in a degree from some accounts I have heard," he continued, glancing toward the Saxon. "I have watched thee closely the few days we have been together, and, from unmistakable signs, I know that a lie is not in thee. But let not this lesson go unheeded. Thy ignorance of the laws of our religion, which make it death to touch a vestal of Nerf, and the act itself, which, apart from the offense, was noble and chivalrous, acquit thee."

"Venerable sage," said Clotaire, bending on one knee, "I am grateful for thy clemency. But pardon me if, scorning all mean shifts and crooked ways, I ask thee what is perhaps a rude question."

Semo nodded his head in reply.

"Are the vestals of Nerf vowed for life to the service of the temple?"

"Why askest thou, stranger?" replied Semo, looking down to hide a fierce light which was kindled in his eyes.

"Because, if they are not, and can be released from their vows, I would pay a royal ransom for Mona," he said, eagerly.

"Thou wouldst buy her? There are slaves in Erin, but they come from Britain,—from Gaul,—from Rome. No native of the land has ever been in bonds," he replied, in suppressed tones.

"Enslave Mona! I would wed her!" exclaimed the noble youth.

"Thou wilt never wed Mona. Forget her, Count of Bretagne, forget her; or it may not go well with thee."

Just then a wail rang wildly through the marble hall, and Dairene rushed in, tearing her hair, frantic in all her gestures, and fell sobbing at the feet of Semo.

"Why this anguish, Dairene?" he asked, in a cold and severe tone.

"Mona! Mona! the light of my heart is no more! she has fallen from the cliffs into the sea! Here is her veil, which a fisherman found hanging on the rock from which she fell! Oh, child of my age! thou art lost to me forever!"

"Thou hast forgotten the presence of strangers. Cover thy face, Dairene, return, and hang the shrine and statues with cypress and poppies," said Semo, coldly; but his lips quivered, and a shudder, scarcely perceptible, passed over him; for Mona, whose life he had saved from the sacrificial knife, had been the only human joy of his existence: he delighted in her as in a fair and fragrant flower, which, strengthening and growing in brightness and splendor under his fostering care, he had offered spotless and fresh to his deities.

"Ye can retire. Be ready to start ere dawn to-morrow, toward Tara," he said, calmly.

As they left the apartment, a door at the upper end was opened by a feeble hand, and a Druid, arrayed in his sacerdotal robes, entered. He was older and more bowed than Semo, and there was an expression of blended fear and horror on his countenance as he tottered toward him.

"Aged Moriat, what brings thee hither? Thy limbs are weak and faltering with the weight of years. I would have come to thee," said Semo, stretching out his hands, and leading him to his own chair.

"I may not tarry, O Semo. Strange marvels have come to pass. Calamities threaten the land! The oracles but rarely reply to our invocations: they have by some mightier Power been almost silenced. But to-day, when I offered sacrifice to Tienne, there came a sound like the rushing of mighty wings, and the sacred fires were suddenly extinguished. A heap of blackened ashes was all that remained of the victim and the glowing coals on which it lay, while a voice issued from the shrine,—it sounded like a wail from Tartarus,—crying, 'Never more! Henceforth we are chained in silence. Behold, the King enters His inheritance to rule over those He has ransomed with a price. Never more!—never more!"

"It is an evil omen," cried Semo, wringing his hands.
"Our power is departing from us. Cormac gave us the

first blow. The second we received in the grove of Tara, when the King of the Jews was crucified in Palestine, filling the earth with blackness and horror, as if a God had died. The third is at hand! Woe for the priests and bards, woe for the temples and shrines, of Erin!" And, covering his face with his robes, he wept.

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CHAPTER VII.

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A PARTY of weary travelers was winding slowly and cautiously through a dark and narrow gorge, whose outlet was concealed from view, either by an abrupt turn or by the heavy mist which obscured the day-dawn. Not a word was spoken. Some sat upright in their saddles, enjoying such fitful repose as only extreme fatigue invites; others gazed on the blank mist which surrounded them, with a dreamy and abstracted air. The very horses looked sullen and hungry, as their hoofs rung on the loose pebbles and rocks which obstructed the path. An aged man rode in their midst; his voluminous robes were wrapped closely around him, almost concealing his face,—while his bowed head and his silent and majestic air invested him with an aspect of great dignity. It was Semo, the Arch-Druid, with a party of Druids, bards, and brehons, on their way to Tara, for the twofold purpose of assisting at the grand festival of Baal and of being present as peers of Erin at the assembly of the Estates of the nation. two foreign nobles, Clotaire of Gaul and Ulric of Germany, under the escort of Abaris the bard, who had been appointed by Semo as their Mentor and associate, rode together. The German wore a dissatisfied and hungry expression on his handsome features, while he of Bretagne, somewhat moody, indulged in sad, fruitless thoughts, which did little honor to his powers of self-control and good sense; for he still cherished wild love-visions of Mona the vestal.

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"Noble Abaris," he said, at last, in a low tone, to the princely bard, "cannot we spur on a little faster, thou and I? I can bear many evils with patience, provided I have two things which are essential to my existence,—sunshine and air. This horrible mist suffocates me."

"It weighs heavily on me also. Methought thou wert sleeping off some of the weariness of incessant travel. But follow me. We have only to gallop to the summit of the nearest hill to meet the morning in its glory," said Abaris, cheeringly.

"Hill! Where shall we find such a landmark in a sea of vapor like this?"

"We, who know where those landmarks lie, can find them in the darkest midnight. Follow me," replied Abaris, reining up his steed, which, obeying the signal, shot forward, like an arrow from a bow, and was lost to view in the mist. Pursuing the sound of his horse's feet, Clotaire followed him. For several minutes they galloped on in silence over a level country; at last he found that he was on rising ground, which his jaded horse ascended with difficulty. Guiding him slowly up, cheered by the voice of his companion, who was still unseen, he ascended by slow degrees the narrow and rugged mountain-path, until he reached the summit, where he found Abaris, standing with folded hands and bowed head, looking toward the east, where a golden halo, glimmering through the white vapor, announced the rising sun. Clotaire dismounted, and leaned against a gray rock, waiting patiently until his orisons were over.

"It is brighter here; but this cloudy barrier still shuts out the view," he said.

"Be patient! I already feel the breath of the southwest on my cheek. It is moving like a spirit through the earth-cloud, which is rippling and flowing away like a shaded river toward a sun-bright sea. It will soon be lifted heavenward, where, burnished with glory, it will canopy the pathway of the sun. Like the spirits of the just, who shake the dust from their robes to enter into a more glorious life, it leaves this ignoble earth to bathe in heavenly mysteries," said the bard, in a rapt tone.

"How sayest thou, Abaris? Is there another life than this, into which the just pass after death? If so, what becomes of those who, while living, stain the earth with their crimes?" inquired Clotaire, earnestly.

"They also pass into another life; but it is in the form of some ignoble brute or poor insect,* where they remain, enduring all the evils incident to its state, yet filled with a keen and immortal intelligence which makes their punishment more horrible. Thus their souls are transmigrated through progressive grades, until they develop a repentance and purity and wisdom to which they were strangers on earth, when they are released. Thus thou dost perceive that rewards await the just, and punishments the wicked," said Abaris, fervently.

"What is the code which must be adopted to procure the immortal life of reward?" asked Clotaire, with interest.

"The general laws of this grand code are benevolence, tenderness, forgiveness of injuries, and love of enemies. It is full of benignity and gentleness. It forbids sensuality, love of pleasure, and attachment to worldly objects."

"And suppose these laws are transgressed,—for nature must be perfect to practice them: is there no atonement?"

"None. We make our own destiny, whether for good or evil. But thou wilt know more in proper time. The mysteries of religion must be taught in the solemn gloom

^{*} The doctrine of Metempsychosis was one of the dogmas of the faith of the Druids.

and silence of the temples. Wilt thou listen? for the spirit of song is on me. Hear the plaint of the blind and aged Oisin," said Abaris, uncovering his small, gold-strung harp, which he always carried with him. He swept his hands over the keys, and to a plaintive and murmuring accompaniment which was interspersed with notes expressive of deep feeling, he sang, in clear and softly-modulated tones, the Lament of Oisin:*

"I behold, O Sun, thy beams no more,
Whether thy yellow hair flows out
On the light eastern clouds, or thou
Tremblest at the gates of the west.
Thou art not like me! Thy years will have no end,
Neither shalt thou sleep in the clouds,
Careless of the voice of the morning!
Exult then, O Sun,
In the strength of thy youth!
Age is dark and unlovely;
It is like the glimmering of the moon
Through the mists of the hills,
When thy eyes flash through broken clouds."

Then, in more stirring strains, the bard, lifting up his voice from the soft recitative, sang the following anthem, while his eyes, flashing with the spirit of song, gazed toward the reddening east.

"Whence are thy beams, O Sun,
Thy everlasting light?
Thou comest forth in awful beauty,
And the stars hide their heads in the sky;
The moon, cold and pale,
Sinks in the western waves;
But thou,—thyself,—who can be
The companion of thy course?
The oaks of the mountain fall;
The mountains themselves decay with years;
The ocean sinks, and grows again;

^{*} From Barron Harrold's translation of Irish poetry.

The moon herself is lost in heaven;
But thou art forever the same,
Rejoicing in the brightness of thy course.
When the world is dark with tempests,
When thunders roll, and lightning flies,
Thou lookest in thy beauty from the clouds
And laughest at the storm."*

And while the young bard's voice rang in silvery notes, floating out on the air like a spirit-song, the wind freshened, and lifted the gray mist upward, where, meeting the sun-rays, it brightened and glowed like flaming banners in the zenith. Far below them, Clotaire of Bretagne beheld a scene of rich and picturesque beauty spread out. Rath and glen, brae and knoll, all dappled with the snowy hawthorn and tinted with edges of light, lough and winding river, rolling lands rich with growing harvests, hoary forests, distant plains dotted with cots and villages, the lofty Betagh-houses and their rich pastures and roaming herds, distant crags and purple hill-sides, where proudly uprose the chieftain towers and lordly strongholds, while here and there, rising like gray Titans amid the landscape, stood the high towers of the Druids, where, like the Egyptians and Chaldees of old, they studied the mystery of the planets and exercised some of the most awful and secret rites of their pagan creed, -all, bathed in undulating shadows or gleaming with crimson and gold, greeted the stranger's eyes.

"Dius Fidius!" he exclaimed, shading his eyes with his hand, while he gazed delightedly down:—"this is worth a world-wide travel to behold. But ha! on this side I see a splendid city, filled with palaces of marble, over which innumerable banners, whose blazonry I cannot distinguish, are unfolding to the winds. Beyond, on the height of a

^{*} The same.

gentle eminence, I see a magnificent palace, whose splendid pillars and majestic arches, whose noble porticoes and turrets of fretted marble, whose lofty statues and gleaming fountains, strike me with wonder, as the dark forest throws out the whole in the broad sunlight! Noble bard, do I look on Tara?"

"Thou art right, noble stranger. This is the city, that the palace of Tara," replied the bard, proudly. "There dwells Laogare, monarch of all Ireland, and within its halls of legislation, every third year, the four provincial kings, the princes, the nobles, the chieftains, the Druids, the bards, the brehons, the ollahms, the commanders of battalions, and the master-artisans, meet to deliberate on the affairs of the nation, repair abuses, and dispense justice. It is called the 'Assembly of the Estates of Tara.'"

"And that palace to the right?"

"That," replied Abaris, with a smile, "is one of the wonders of the world, which fills every foreigner with amazement. It is the *Griannan-na-Nienghean*, where the wives, daughters, and sisters of the princes, knights, and chiefs of Tara regulate, in deliberative council, all the affairs appertaining to their sex and rank."

"Women!" almost shouted Clotaire. "And are their decisions laws?"

"Their decisions are laws."

"Dost thou know, sir bard, that this thing, which is indeed a novelty, increases my veneration for Erin? Where religion, learning, heroism, and women are so highly esteemed, the people must needs be refined, intelligent, and patriotic. But now pardon me, for I shall ask thee perchance a rude question; but it is suggested by thy own noble and lofty qualities, to an imitation of which I shall aspire."

"Thou art my pupil. All that I know thou mayest command," replied Abaris, well pleased with the frank and courteous manner of Clotaire.

"Are not thy talents, thy eloquence, thy bravery, wasted in the occupations of what seems to me a useless order? Why not leave music to women and troubadours, as we of Gaul do, and buckle on the sword and shield of thy fathers, that thy name may become glorious?" asked Clotaire, earnestly; for he had learned to love the gentle bard, as well as admire his elevated character.

"Know, O noble stranger," replied Abaris, speaking with grave eloquence, "that I would not exchange my bardic character for the most powerful throne in Europe. Our functions are sublime and holy, and it is by no ordinary labor that we attain to the highest dignities of our order. We are trained to arms; and, though not bearing arms in the field, we excite the chieftains and soldiers to valor by singing the glories of their fathers. Our persons are held sacred by contending armies, who consider any injury inflicted on us a sacrilege. During an engagement we animate the troops with the Rusga-Catha, and when we give the sign of truce the fierce might of battle ceases, to listen to the voice of our negotiations. We march with our chiefs at the heads of armies, our only arms the harp, our only defense the white robes of our order. While the battle rages, we stand apart, and watch in security every action of our chiefs, and not only record their noble deeds, but also any dastardly act they may be guilty of. Another of our important functions is, with pomp and pageant, and with all the ceremony of lamentation, to bury the dead. If a prince or a chief falls in battle, we utter his fame, and inscribe it in psalters for posterity. The Druids perform the sacred rites, the Seanachai recites his funeral song, which is sung over his grave by a Recaraide, who sustains his voice by striking the keys of his harp, while the symphonies of the solemn ceremony are performed by minstrels, who chant in chorus at intervals, in which they are joined responsively by attending bards. Then we soothe the tumultuous passions of the living, and impress on their minds a reverence and imitation of the virtues of the dead,—their excellence and heroism.

"He to whom the bards refuse those last offices is deemed accursed, and his spirit wanders, in darkness and gloom, through woods, morass, and fen, where the piping winds blend their lament, and the Banshee's moan in terrific sounds together. For these accursed ones the probation of transmigration of spirits is denied."*

"Pardon me, noble Abaris," said Clotaire, reverently.
"Thy vocation is indeed enviable. Thy order is indeed
the genius of enlightened government,—a mighty magician, who swayeth the minds of men at will. Brute force
and brute triumphs are admirable; but those who conquer and subdue without arms are worthy of all honor."

"Our functions do not disqualify us for the highest honors in the gift of the nation," continued Abaris. "The greatest and wisest of Erin's legislators and kings was Eochaidh, a bard, whose reign constitutes the most memorable epoch in our history. Being a prince of profound learning, and wishing to unite his reverence for his order with his royal dignities, he assumed the name of Ollahm Fodhla.† But let us drop these grave matters, and divert ourselves with the scenes below."

"By Pallas! those throngs of mortals, who in every direction are moving toward Tara, with banners of green

^{*} For a full description of the order of bards, see Mooney's very agreeable and instructive "History of Ireland."

[†] Learned Doctor.

and gold, which gleam in the sunlight, only a degree brighter than the robes they wear, remind me of the great tournament I once saw at Paris," exclaimed the enthusiastic young noble.

"It is not only a fair pageant," said Abaris, proudly, while his cheeks glowed and his eyes flashed, "but in all the scene you behold evidences of a nation's glory and prosperity. But we linger here too long; let us hasten away to rejoin Semo, who is even now approaching the south gate of the city."

"Shall we, Ulric of Heidelberg and I, reside with Semo at Tara?" inquired the young count, anxiously.

"Nay, noble stranger: Semo will spend his time between the council-chamber and the temple. Thou and Count Ulric will be the guests of my father, the King of Munster."

"And thyself, Abaris:—we shall not be separated, I hope?"

"I belong to the temple also. My duties will leave me no time for social pleasures," he replied, gravely.

"I shall not be so churlish as to refuse the proffered hospitality of thy house, for I, like all my countrymen, am fond of the courtesies and refinements of life; but—but—pardon my forwardness—are there no daughters belonging to thy father's household?"

"I have five sisters, sir count, who are called the crown-jewels of Munster, because they are as good as they are fair, and a mother whose matronly virtues are the glory of her family," said the bard, with tender pride. "Of my five sisters two only are at home. One is the consort of the King of Ulster; one—the youngest and loveliest—is a vestal of Nerf; one is lady of honor to the Queen of Laogare. Under the auspices of my mother and the two maidens who remain with her, thou wilt see

not only the beautiful maids of Erin, but the customs and manners of our highest classes. Now for a gallop over the plains of Magh-Breagh toward Tara."

When Semo, with his cortege, reached the gates of the city, he was met by a courier from the monarch, who handed him a vellum billet, and informed him that one of the royal chariots, with an escort of honor, awaited his pleasure. He opened the note, which contained only a few words, and without a remark entered the chariot, and was driven rapidly off toward the palace of Tara.

In a lofty chamber, whose walls were incrusted with Italian marble and gold,-where the light flowed in through glass windows which were stained in gorgeous dyes,-where chairs and couches of carved oak, inlaid with silver and pearl and covered with the richest stuffs, -where from the slender pillars hung draperies from the looms of Egypt and Ind,-where, under shaded arches, set far back, like sacred things, were heaps of old Etruscan and Phœnician manuscripts,—where stood a table covered with charts, treaties, and Milesian books of law, with implements of writing in gold and silver,where, in a place of honor, stood a harp studded with jewels,—was the monarch Laogare. He was a tall, majestic-looking personage, who wore his kingly robes with a royal air, and whose countenance indicated intelligence, frankness, and wisdom, with an occasional flash in his eyes which also told of an ardent and impetuous temperament. His usual expression was cheerful, dignified, and unclouded; but when Semo the Arch-Druid entered his cabinet, his countenance wore a flushed and troubled look. He stepped forward, and, after saluting the aged Druid, led him to a seat beside his own. An attendant entered with refreshments; but Semo-rigid in all the observances of his order-partook only of a thin cake of

wheaten bread and a goblet of water, then, turning to the king, awaited in grave silence the opening of the business which had brought him hither with such unusual speed.

"Thou wilt pardon me, venerable Semo," said the monarch, "that, having matters of grave import weighing on my mind,—matters which threaten the ancient institution of Erin with danger,—I have thus hastily sought thy counsel."

"Whatever bodes evil to Erin, O king, bodes it also to me; and whatever threatens her monarch touches the soul of mine honor," said Semo, slowly.

"But this foe aims directly at thy order. It would overthrow the power of the temple, and crush the dogmas which we inherit from our forefathers the Phænicians."

A shudder passed over Semo, which shook his robes; but, commanding himself, he replied, in calm, firm tones,—

"I am old and calm! Speak out, royal Laogare; speak out; and if this evil can be remedied by my counsels, they are thine. If they are powerless, let the Rusga-Catha ring through Tara, and the foes of Erin be swept away by her chiefs, like chaff before the whirlwind."

"Know, then, that one who calleth himself Patricius has landed in Drogh-heda, where the Boyne falls into the sea, and is preaching his strange doctrines with such fervor that not only the people, but many of the nobles, have been converted to his novel creed. He declares that the religion taught by the Druids is vile and idolatrous, while the God whom he worships is powerful and alone worthy of the homage of mankind."

Just then the door opened, and the arch-poet of Laogare entered, with alarm and trepidation depicted on every feature. Not heeding the presence of Semo, in his impetuous haste, he knelt before Laogare, exclaiming,—

"Royal sir, Sesgnon, the Lord of West-Meath, with all his family, has embraced the doctrines of the audacious stranger Patricius, who preaches an atonement through a crucified God, and pours libations in his honor on the heads of all who receive his word."

"Sesgnon! sayest thou Sesgnon is a traitor to the religion of his fathers? Sesgnon, the bravest and most honored of our chiefs? Send hither the Grand Master of the Knights of Tara. But hold, Dubtach! where hath this infidel, this stirrer-up of sedition, concealed himself?" cried the indignant monarch.

"He scorns all concealment, royal Laogare, and is even now encamped at *Firta-Fir-Tiec*, on the banks of the Boyne, with his disciples," replied Dubtach.

"Summon the Knights of Tara and the Red Branch to the rescue!" cried the monarch, more than ever enraged. "I will in person lead them out to destroy this man, who beards us on our very throne."

"Monarch," said Semo, rising, "think not that I have traveled from the mouth of the Shannon to Tara without learning something of this man. A native of Gaul, he was in early youth sold by pirates to one Milcho, who appointed him to the care of his herds. After serving his seven years, he returned to the continent, from thence to Rome, where, by his address and great art he secured friends, who advanced his interests and fortunes at court. He returns to Erin as the ambassador of Celestine, the sovereign of Rome, endowed with munificent gifts and a patent of nobility, which gives him a rank next to emperors. Hence we must be cautious. What we would withhold from the man must be conceded to the ambassador. The vengeance of our outraged and insulted order could and should easily crush the man, were he not invested with the robes of an imperial envoy. Let us

wait. He has as yet only seduced men by false doctrines; but should he encroach a hair's breadth beyond the limits of his functions, let the gods be avenged."

"Speak on, venerable Semo: thy words are full of wisdom," said Laogare.

"Two days hence," continued the Arch-Druid, "the Baal-fire will be kindled on the plains of Magh-Breagh. Send a proclamation to Patricius, warning him that all fires must be extinguished, according to the ancient laws, on that day, and no spark kindled except the Baal-fire, from which alone it will be lawful for him, as well as the natives of Erin, to rekindle the blaze on his hearthstone. Then summon him to appear with his credentials, the following day, in the hall of Tara, where, before the assembled power and wisdom of Erin, he can declare his mission."

"Go, Dubtach, with two of the knights of Tara, and courteously give greeting to the stranger Patricius, inform him of our customs, and invite his attendance before the congress of Tara," said Laogare, throwing himself back, with a wearied look, in his chair. Semo, gathering up his robes, glided out, to be present at the rites of the temple, where they were waiting for him, and Dubtach, the bard, withdrew to fulfill the commands of the monarch.

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CHAPTER VIII.

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THE BAAL-FIRE.

Through the gate of a broad marble court, Abaris, the bard, conducted his guests toward the vestibule of the royal palace of his father, the provincial King of Munster. Here he, in his father's name, welcomed them in courteous and affable terms, after which he spoke a few words of greeting to the numerous attendants who thronged with reverential affection around him.

"We will now seek my mother and sisters, noble sirs," he said, inviting them, with a graceful gesture, to enter. Passing through an oblong hall, paneled with oak, they entered an apartment in the form of a peristyle, surrounded by slender pillars of polished marble. In the midst of the marble floor, whose inlaid pattern of colored stones vied with the painter's skill, was a fountain, which threw up toward the fretted ceiling two tiny jets of water, which, issuing from the throats of serpents whose scales were of gold, descended again in crystal gems over the mosses and flowers and winged myths which were arranged about the marge of its artificial basin. The products of Ind and Greece, statuary from the sculptors of the Cyclades, vases of silver and porphyry from Egypt, loaded with spices or rich flowers, hangings of silk, mirrors of steel, lamps of gold on pedestals of alabaster, enriched the scene.*

^{*} It must be remembered that Ireland, at this period, was the seat of civilization, learning, luxury, and refinement.

The royal matron of Munster, hearing of her son's arrival with two strangers, hastened to welcome them. Indescribably tender and respectful was the demeanor of Abaris toward his mother, while hers to him was full of maternal pride, deference for his bardic character, and a deep, quiet air of love. She was a stately matron, who yet retained the brightness and freshness of youth, chastened by a dignified and graceful demeanor in fine keeping with her age and station. She received the two foreign nobles, the friends of her son, the guests of the nation, with a welcome so kind and cheering that it at once placed them on the footing of friends. Won by the elegant grace of Clotaire, and not chilled by the sullen courtesy of Ulric, she went out, and returned with her daughters Eileen and Eva, to whom she made the strangers known with words of commendation, after which she led the way to the eating-hall, where a table was ready spread with every delicacy and substantial dish which the culinary art of the day had introduced. Here Ulric of Heidelberg grew unctuous and bland, and convinced Clotaire,—who generally observed his movements, because he mistrusted his character,-by the dexterity with which he disposed of the viands, that his vaunted heroism was all bombast, and his ruling passion gluttony.

Conversation and music whiled the hours away until evening, when they went, with the King of Munster, to pay their court at Tara to the Queen of Laogare, after which they witnessed the midnight procession which opened the Bealtin mysteries. The next morning the mother of Abaris invited them to accompany herself and daughters to the opening of the council of the ladies at the *Griannan-na-Nienghean*, where they were dazzled by the beauty and splendor of the fair members of the council; from thence to the sacred grove, where the Druids

and vestals performed solemn ceremonies in view of the people; after which they proceeded, in chariots, to the plains of Magh-Breagh, to witness the games and races of the Athletæ.

Thus, in a continual whirl of pleasant novelty, two days of the great festival sped by. But amid the pomps and pageants, the splendors and pleasures, of the scene, the thoughts of Clotaire wore one sad hue; his heart was shaded by its first grief; he had loved and lost in the same hour. As lightning sometimes impresses surrounding objects on the flesh of the victim it has stricken, so Mona's image, her wild, tender eyes, her splendid beauty, were indelibly stamped on his memory. In every scene, in sunshine and shadow, it walked with his inner life, and through its medium he saw all exterior things.

"Wilt thou accompany us to the procession of the vestals of Nerf to-night?" asked Eileen.

"By all means," quickly replied Ulric. "Count Clotaire would rather lose his spurs than the sight of the pageant."

"It is very solemn and beautiful," replied Eileen, not perceiving the covert sneer, "though the vestals are all veiled, and we can only imagine the loveliness and youth they have vowed to Nerf."

"Are those vestals never seen unveiled, Count Clotaire?" urged Ulric, with a malicious sneer.

"It depends entirely on circumstances, I presume, Count Ulric. Thou art aware that there are sometimes imperative circumstances which will not even allow the chastisement of insolence. Inexorable events may also tear off the drapery from the vestal's brow," he replied, pointedly.

"Are the vestals of noble birth, or are they chosen

from the people?" inquired Ulric, turning to Eileen, to hide his confusion.

"Some are of noble birth,—a few of royal parentage. Many are the daughters of the people. We have a sister who is a vestal of Nerf Naom."

"A sister! It seems to my rude understanding that there are only three things in Erin to which all pay undivided homage,—religion, learning, and hospitality."

"Yes, we pay homage to these; but they are not, believe me, the only objects of our veneration," she replied, smiling. "But tell me," she continued, as the Count of Bretagne led her sister to the harp; "what is this mystery about the vestal?"

"Only a little amour of the Count of Bretagne's, of which he is ashamed. He managed to see one of the vestals of Munster without her veil, and became desperately enamored of her charms. Unfortunately for him, she disappeared, and he has been wearing the cypress ever since," he replied, in a low, sarcastic tone.

An expression of horror shaded Eileen's face as she glanced toward Clotaire, who, all unconscious, stood beside her sister, turning over the music as she played; and, after a few remarks on indifferent subjects; she left the room to seek her mother, to whom she imparted the news she had just heard. Ere long a messenger came with a courteous apology to the two nobles, and a request to the Lady Eva to attend her mother, who was going to the palace of Tara on a visit to the queen. Chagrined and disappointed, Ulric cursed his stupidity and the malice which fell so speedily back on himself, while Clotaire, glad to be released, and happy in the prospect of solitude, hurried away to indulge his sadness by watching the vestals and thinking of Mona!

The next day was the grandest of the festival. Thou-

sands and tens of thousands, in holiday attire, came in from hill and valley, from country-side and their homes by the distant sea, and congregated on the plains of Magh-Breagh. Tara emptied its thousands on the plain. From the banks of the Boyne, from the north and south, they still came, with pealing music and waving banners. With the braying of trumpets, the shrill scream of the pibroch, the softer notes of harps, and the anthems of human voices, they swept on, -a human ocean, -and surrounded the lofty altar, built of long narrow slabs of white marble, piled together, which towered like an isle of rock-crystal in the midst of the plain. The monarch, attended by his consort and family, the provincial kings and their families and retinues, the nobles and chieftains, in chariots whose adornments were of precious stones and the trappings of whose horses were links of silk, and gold, wound slowly -a splendid cortége-through the multitudes, toward it. There was a temporary throne, covered with cloth of gold, erected near the altar of Baal, on which the royal Laogare, surrounded by his court, took his station, in view of the vast concourse, who made the welkin ring with their shouts of fealty when they saw him standing crowned and robed in splendor, the protector of their own and their country's destinies.

Each individual carried either an unlighted taper of wax, or a torch of resinous wood. Some of these were carved and twisted in grotesque forms; some were decked with flowers; some were moulded in the shape of birds, from whose beaks the oiled wick hung like a worm, others in the form of serpents, from whose open jaws it protruded like a tongue, while others, more elegant, were in the shape of flowers, the wick spread out in their cups like delicate stamens. However much these tapers and torches differed, they were all intended for one object,

which was to get light from the Baai-fire, to kindle the flame on their darkened hearth-stones.

The city was deserted, and more than a million of human beings were out in the plains of Magh-Breagh,men of all ranks, ages, and climes,-to witness the solemnity. There was another feeling, besides reverence for the rites of their religion, which increased the interest of all present in the ceremonies. All had heard of Patricius and his doctrinal innovations. His tents on the banks of the Boyne were distinctly visible, and a rumor had gone abroad that he would in some signal manner show his contempt for the Bealtic ceremonies. At last, winding like a solemn current through the dense crowds, the Druids, bards, and brehons, led by the Arch-Druid Semo, moved along, to the sound of rolling anthems and deeptoned symphonies, toward the marble altar; while the human masses, pressed back on either side, like receding waves, made a clear pathway for them, paying them lowly homage as they passed. The Druids, arrayed in their magnificent robes, wrought with gold and blazoned with gems, their flowing locks crowned by the square caps of their order, with grave looks and majestic mien walked together in ranks of two and two.

The bards followed, arrayed in loose white cothas, confined about the waist by girdles, their limbs incased in a truise of weft fitting closely and fastened about the ankles with stripes of the exact number of colors peculiar to their order, their beards flowing, and their long thick locks bound with fillets of gold, with their harps hanging pendant before them, and received from the people, who believed them to be gifted with the powers of prophecy, a homage but little inferior to that they offered the Druids. After them came the brehons, or historians, clad in the

distinctive dress belonging to their rank, and followed by the sacerdotal attendants and scholastics.

Meanwhile, Laogare, elevated by his position in full view of all, was observed to look pale and troubled, and threw more than one anxious glance toward the tents of the stranger, where all was silent and motionless.

Semo, bowed and faltering, assisted by two Druids, who bore between them, on a tray of gold, the fagots, tinder, and implements for kindling the sacred fire, ascended the steps of the altar, and, having reached the broad platform on top, stood with his head and hands uplifted, adoring the bright object of his worship A hush, like the silence of the dead, fell on the hosts around, who with breathless awe watched his slightest movement. He held in his hand a framed crystal; and, after his assistants had arranged the fagots and tinder, he held it-uttering incantations all the while-so as to intercept the direct rays of the sun, now beaming on the scene in unclouded glory, and concentrate them into a powerful focus. In a few moments a light wreath of white smoke curled upward: it was wafted away, leaving in view a clear, high flame of fire, which burned steadily and brightly. When the people saw it, a tremendous shout of exultation rent the air. A burst of music, the clangor of trumpets, blended with the roar; but suddenly it was hushed: a wild fear and fury seemed to have fallen on all, when they saw Semo, ghastly, and shaking in every limb, with his arm outstretched toward the tents of Patricius, where, blazing fiercely and brightly, a large fire flamed up in the air.

"Behold, O son of Niall," exclaimed Semo, turning to Laogare,—"behold, sons of Heremon and Ir, how the daring stranger defies our sacred law and throws his infidel scorn on our most solemn rites. If those flames are not extinguished and trodden out, I tell thee, O king, that he who kindled it, and his successors, will hold the sovereignty of Erin forever."

"Venerable Semo," cried Laogare, in loud and distinct accents, "the fire thou hast drawn from heaven is sacred. That which hath been kindled by you stranger is common flame, which imparteth neither curse nor blessing. From its light the fires of Erin will not be rekindled. Therefore let it burn to ignoble ashes, while we light our torches at the sacred fires of Baal."

The Arch-Druid bowed his head, and another wild shout rolled upon the air, like thunder.

"To-morrow," continued the monarch, "this stranger shall answer for this insult to the representatives of all Erin, who will assemble in the great Hall of Tara, where he must either plead a good cause or suffer the penalty."

Laogare then gathered his robes about him, and, ascending the altar, adored for a moment, then held the point of his scepter, around which a taper of wax was twined, like a serpent, to the Baal-fire. When he withdrew it, and held it up, a small, strong flame was blazing on its point. This was the commencement of lighting up the hearth-stones of the kingdom from the Baal-fire. All who could, ascended and lit their tapers, or flambeaus, on the altar; those who were less fortunate contented themselves with the privilege of borrowing from a neighbor, quite satisfied to know that it all came from the same source; until the whole of that immense throng was supplied with a portion of the sacred fire, which they bore away rejoicing to their respective homes.

Meanwhile, the fire of Patricius burned low, - the

white ashes were borne away like seeds on the wind; but it touched the roots of a dark mythology, whose branches it would wither and consume. In its ruddy light the Baal-fire had paled its demon glow; and, although the people knew it not then, it was to them as much a sign of promise as was the pillar of fire in the wilderness to the Israelites.

PATRICIUS.

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CHAPTER IX.

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PATRICIUS.

THERE were to be no public processions that night. In the hidden recesses of the temple, before mysterious shrines, the awful and concluding rites of the festival, on which no profane eye might look, were to be celebrated. But from the turrets and halls of Temora,* from the palace of Tara, and from the city festive lights blazed out on the night, while the light sounds of music and mirth floated in sweet, wild echoes through the air. The streets, garlanded with flowers and brilliantly illuminated, presented a scene of unequaled gayety and splendor. Every door was thrown open, and every portal wreathed with evergreens and roses. Ladies attired in silken robes which blazed with jewels, and attended by groups of nobles, princes, and knights, all arrayed in the magnificent and distinctive insignia of their respective orders, thronged the streets, saluting each other with pleasant words of recognition and many a gay jest, as they visited from one house to another, remaining a short time at each, uniting in the dance or song, exchanging words of cheer and greeting with friends, then flitting away to some other scene of splendor and hospitality. But in all of these gay assemblies might be seen groups of noble and grave

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^{*} The palace of Laogare, the monarch.

men who discussed in low and impassioned tones the events of the day,—the audacious stranger whose tents were pitched on the banks of the Boyne, the prophecy of Semo the Arch-Druid, and all that would probably occur on the morrow, when Patricius, obeying the summons of the monarch, presented himself before the Assembly of the Estates.

Amid all this whirl of hospitality and festivity, the palace of the King of Munster was probably the center of attraction. The beauty of the ladies Eileen and Eva, and the presence of the two foreign nobles, whose adventures and personal appearance rumor had exaggerated into something almost fabulous, attracted there the largest and most splendid company in Tara.

Since the morning, Clotaire of Bretagne had noticed and felt a marked change in the conduct of the royal ladies of Munster toward him; but, unconscious of offense, and stung by the cold courtesy of their manner, and also nettled by the self-complaisant and patronizing air of Ulric the Saxon, who seemed to be in high favor, but who was wise enough to present no tangible point of offense, he withdrew from the brilliant circle to search for silence and solitude. The sight of beauty crowned with roses, the sound of music ringing out the full expression of the heart's poesy, the fairy, whirling, flashing dance, the dazzling lights, the lightsome jest and merry laugh, oppressed him; and, feeling all the sadness and isolation of a stranger in a strange land, although many a bright eye sought his, and many a beauteous face smiled on him to court a word or glance from the dark and noble stranger, he fled from it all, and wandered out beyond the gates of the city, across the plain, toward the river. There all was silent and dark. The pale glimmer of the stars over the scene, the sound of waves as the

Boyne swept onward to the sea, added to the solemnity of the hour. Wrapping his toga closely about him, he quickened his pace, and, without an object except solitude, reached the shore of the river. Seeking a sheltered spot, which he soon found beneath a clump of willows whose long, green tresses swept the dark tide below, he paused to rest.

On the opposite shore a glimmer of lights suggested to him, for the first time, thoughts of the stranger from Rome who had that day mocked the power of the Druids and showed his contempt for the superstitions of their old and time-honored creed. And then, in the midst of that gloom and silence, where, free from the brawl and battle and seductions of life, Nature uttered her oracles, the mind of the young noble, ever open to the inspirations of good, began a new life. His soul, insensibly led by its eternal affinities, soared beyond the material boundaries which the world assigned it, and panted after supernal strength and wisdom. He reviewed the magnificent pageant of Baal. Again he saw a nation surrounding that lofty altar, which now looked so white and ghastly beneath the stars. He saw the splendor of royalty, the chivalry of nobles, the wisdom and intellect of the age. there assembled to pay superstitious reverence to a rite which they held sacred. He saw the Arch-Druid, the sage and virtuous Semo, the dispenser and enthusiastic high-priest of the mythology he taught, ascend the sacred pile, while below, breathless and awe-struck, a people waited in expectation for the kindling of that flame which they, in their docile faith, believed came from heaven. Then he remembered the pause, the thrill, the horror which pervaded this grand array of temporal and spiritual majesty, when from the rising ground of Firta-Fir-Tiec, before the tent of Patricius, a bright flame, full of defiance and scorn, shot sky-ward, a sign and warning to all who saw it. Who had done this? A Cyrus or an Alexander, with hosts of legionaries to support and defend the aggression? Had the barbarians from Britain, led on by their Roman masters, poured their wild hordes upon the wave-washed shores of Erin, and marched hither to throw down the gauntlet of war on the plains of Magh-Breagh? It was none of these. Behind those tents lay no army. There were no hosts encamped under the shelter of yonder hills. Only Patricius was there. A single man! A preacher of novelties and strange doctrines, and a scornful witness of the sacred rites of the religion of the land, -a defiant enemy of the old and cherished faith which their fathers had brought from Phænicia! The idea arose to sublimity. One man against hosts of men! who had come, avowedly not to assail mere opinions, but to destroy their temples and overthrow their altars.

"Dius Fidius! he is a brave philosopher, this Patricius! He must be either reckless of life, or fully conscious of a power that no human will can withstand. He is, no doubt, the master of great secrets. If he has faith in the superior excellence of his philosophy,-if he has discovered higher and brighter aims for man than those now known,-by the stars! it is godlike to offer himself to be immolated for the truth. If he is an impostor, seeking greed and power and courting success by audacity, there is still something grand and heroic in his daring: Hercules himself dared nothing greater. Shall the lesson be lost on me? Shall I, the descendant of heroes from remote antiquity,—conscious fully of all that I owe to the higher laws of virtue and morality,-with every instinct, I hope, full of good aspirations and truthful energy, -with the pride of a noble race, and the ambition to add

a brighter link to the ancestral chain, warming my blood, —shall I sink ignobly down beneath the first storm of my life? Shall I die piping out my griefs because a blight has fallen on my heart? No, O Fate! No, O Mona! Over thy ashes will I raise a worthier fame! Inspired by thee, O lost love, will I consecrate my life to acts of heroic virtue, until, like Patricius, I can stand serene and fearless in the strength of my own power. Ha!" exclaimed the young noble, suddenly thrown on his guard by the sound of approaching footsteps. He turned quickly, and saw a figure, muffled in a gray cloak of ample dimensions, standing beside him.

"Who art thou, wandering beyond the city gates at this hour?" demanded the stranger.

"I deny thy right to challenge me, sir stranger," replied the noble stripling.

"I am one of the guardians of the honor of Erin, and demand the reason of thy close neighborhood to the tents of the audacious Roman stranger."

"A close neighborhood, truly! Between us flows a broad, brawling river, over which are no bridges and on whose tide I see no curraghs. Dost take me for a bird or a fish?" said Clotaire of Bretagne, with fierce sarcasm.

"I know thee to be a stranger. To-day a stranger insulted the assembled majesty of Erin. I know thee, Count Clotaire of Bretagne!"

"Having no reason to be ashamed of my name, and with a good blade to defend it, I am Clotaire of Bretagne!" exclaimed he, drawing his Damascene blade from its sheath and standing on the defensive. "Stand back, sir stranger: I am armed. Stand back!"

"Forward is my motto, sir count!" said the stranger, throwing off his fallung, while he sprang on him with an agile movement, and threw his arms around him in

such a close embrace that the Saracen blade was useless. A scuffle ensued, during which the nocturnal assailant acted entirely on the defensive, and enraged his opponent still more by giving vent, several times, to a low, mirthful laugh.

"Think it no discourtesy," he said, when at last, by a successful coup-de-main, he held the stripling count at his mercy,—"think it no discourtesy, my pupil, if I have tested thee somewhat roughly—"

"Abaris," exclaimed the young count, dropping his cimetar,—"Abaris, thou hadst need to humble me thus,—to test my capabilities for self-government, of which I have been dreaming like a fool. But why seek me thus, noble Abaris?"

"I sought thee not. Chance led me this way, and, hearing the sound of a voice which I thought I knew, I came hither with a noiseless step, and heard thy dreams, and determined to assure myself that they were not the dreams of an idle boaster. But I have been wishing to speak to thee all day, but could find no opportunity. A message might have been useless. Thou hast an enemy, —a bitter, implacable enemy."

"In Ulric of Heidelberg! I know it," he replied, calmly.

"Yes. Already has he poisoned the hearts of my family against thee by his extravagant and insidious tales about thy adventure with Mona the vestal. But listen: be calm. This Ulric is a dastard; and what punishment couldst thou inflict on such a thing which would be worthy a noble nature like thine? Thou must either beat him like a dog, or murder him; for he has not the courage to fight. For the honor of knighthood, thou wilt not do either; for the mere gratification of the baser impulses of vengeance, thou shalt not be led into crime.

Leave him to me,—the craven! I will strip him until his designs are apparent, and expose him to the contempt and ignominy he merits; for in this land of ours treachery to friend or foe is ever visited with a wrath that withers the marrow in the bones,—a silent and stern wrath, which makes a leper of its object and drives him from the haunts of his kind."

"He shall unsay this wrong! By Thor! he shall unsay this foul lie!" shouted Clotaire.

"Can a serpent heal the wounds his poisonous fangs have inflicted? Give him—thy contempt. Let him feel that he is powerless to harm thee," said Abaris. "Think not that I have been idle. I sent my father to Semo to hear the truth. Be sure that thy fair fame did not suffer; for Semo regards thee with unusual favor. By this time my mother and sisters know all, and feel pained on account of their coldness toward thee. Thou art already avenged; for this craven knight was a pretender to the hand of my sister Eileen, who will now spurn him; for her high, proud nature would rather mate with an adder than with such baseness. As to Mona, forget her. Such puling grief is unmanly."

"I may not forget Mona. I would not forget her. She is lost to me, in one sense, forever; but the thought of her, like some fair thing throned amid the stars, will lead me, lure me to build high my aspirations, until the deeds they give birth to are as pure as Mona," exclaimed the young noble, with anguish on every feature.

"It is a bright myth; and Death effaces the sacrilege," said Abaris, thoughtfully. "If, then, O Clotaire, my friend, the thought of the dead Mona inspires thee more fully with that active principle of good without which the longest life is valueless, cherish it. The softer emotions of our nature need discipline, equally with the

baser passions: whatever feeds them insidiously exposes the noble soul to the dangers of sensuality," replied the bard, with an air of grave affection.

"Noble Abaris, let thy superior wisdom be my safeguard," replied the young noble, with proud humility. "Thou art always calm, and canst well guide the reins of my impetuous will."

"Calm! Am I calm now?" asked Abaris, abruptly.

"As calm and as cold as yonder sky," replied Clotaire.

"Thou art deceived. My impetuous nature is only chained by a powerful will, which makes the pursuit of virtue its chief aim. But that which passed to-day on the plains of Magh-Breagh has roused all my inner self to a fierce perturbation. I would have avenged by one fell blow the outrage of this daring Patricius, who now seeks by stratagem what the Romans of other days sought by violence. Even now those lights which dance mockingly from his tents over the dark waves of the Boyne, rouse up the chained menials of my will to tumult and violence. But what a comedy is individual wrath against such monstrous provocation! Erin shall never be dishonored in me. It shall not go down to posterity that one of her bards was the assassin of a defenseless stranger, although that stranger hath come with guile and insult to the foot of our throne and our altar,"

"But why heed so despicable an enemy, O Abaris? He is alone and defenseless. What is there to fear?"

"That which human power cannot sway," replied Abaris, gloomily. "You stranger fills my soul with trouble. Even now there is wailing and weeping in the temple for the woe his coming foreshadows. He must be possessed of knowledge beyond mortal sense; or how dare he, unattended except by a few fanatics, and un-

armed, throw open contempt on the Bealtic rites? If he is a mere spy, all will be well. But come with me."

In another moment the Count of Bretagne was seated, with Abaris the bard, in a curragh which lay moored among the sedges on the river-bank. Abaris grasped the oars and pushed out from the shore. The oars bent beneath the sinewy strength of his arms, the light curragh shot out across the mid-channel, riding the waves like a feather, and in a little while glided up on the sands of the opposite shore. Everything about the little camp of Patricius, toward which they directed their steps, was wrapped in silence and repose. After searching around in vain for some indications which might betray him as a spy or invader, and reconnoitering every inch of ground, without the least interruption, they retraced their steps in silence, when suddenly the curtain which hung before the entrance of the tent of Patricius was drawn aside, and a person came hastily out, who, forgetting to replace it, passed into one of the tents in the rear. Standing back in deep shadow, Abaris and Clotaire, without being themselves exposed to observation, saw all that was in the tent of Patricius. They saw him, and wondered at his majestic and benign aspect, his noble air and intellectual features, and the symmetry of his well-proportioned frame. He was arrayed in the rich and flowing vestments of the Roman patricii, and wore, suspended by a chain of gold, an insignia of jewels and gold on his breast, which Abaris thought resembled those crosses which the Egyptians revered as emblems of immortality. He was refolding a parchment, which he secured carefully with cords of twisted silk, after which he knelt before a rude altar, on which stood a crucifix and taper, and, folding his hands, bowed his head with an expression of great humility, after which he made a sign on his forehead,

breast, and shoulders, which they could not comprehend, and uttered rapid and fervent words in a language which they could not distinguish, while his eyes, uplifted, seemed to behold objects beyond mortal vision. They creep nearer,—for they see that he is so wrapped in adoration that he would not heed them if they stood before him,and listen. They both understand him now, as, in the chaste and majestic language of Rome, he pours out the eloquence of his pleading soul for Erin. How he beseeches his Lord, whom he calls Jesus, to enlighten their darkness, to strike off their fetters, to overthrow the idols and abolish the power of demons in this His own inheritance! How he implores the assistance of a Holy and Divine Spirit, of whose existence they have never heard, and beseeches Him to touch his lips with fire, that on the morrow he may preach salvation to the Gentiles, and, like Paul at Athens, make known to the rulers and princes of the people a crucified God. Loved smile ville had a bini

Abaris, intent and silent, almost breathless, leaned forward, the fine lineaments of his face so motionless and pale that they looked like chiseled marble, while his large eyes glowed beneath his massive brows like living sparks. But Patricius uttered no more. His uplifted face wore a look of rapt contemplation, while his features shone with a light that was flowing back and forth, between heaven and him, like a tide of glory.

"It is time for us to be gone," whispered Abaris.

"Dost thou still feel troubled?" asked Clotaire, as they glided swiftly through the gloom toward the shore.

"More than before,—a thousandfold more than before," replied Abaris, in an agitated voice. "To whom does he pray? Whence the light that beamed around him, like the light of a new day beaming behind the eastern hills? He is some mighty enchanter or wondrous prophet!

Already I feel the shadow of stupendous changes. Quick, Clotaire!—I am oppressed! I suffocate!—Away from this spot!—out, out on the foaming river! The wind rushes down on the flood tide—quick! out with the oars.—There—so! There!" he said, or rather gasped, as they threw themselves into the light curragh, which, unmoored, was swept out by the violence of the tide, and danced about like a bubble on the foaming river. A few powerful sweeps of the oar steadied it, and turned its prow shoreward.

When they landed, it was nearly day-dawn. The herdsmen were already leading their flocks out toward the glades and pasture-lands, and the ways leading into Tara were filled with country-people, who were bringing their produce to market, in hopes of reaping a golden harvest in exchange for their commodities.

"We shall meet in a few hours in the hall of Tara," said Abaris, taking leave of Clotaire at the portals of his royal father's court. "Ha! here is my mother! Why abroad so early, my lady mother?"

"A happy and proud day to thee, Abaris, my son," said the lady, kissing his forehead, "and to thee, noble stranger, for whose coming I have watched since the departure of my guests. Pardon us if, too jealous of the honor of the vestals of Nerf Naom, of which order our fairest and dearest daughter is a member, we resented a slander which, at the time it was uttered, filled us with dread and horror. Pity our feelings when we thought that the sanctuary which shelters our daughter had been invaded by sacrilege."

"Royal lady, thou art too kind to a stranger. It is sufficient for me that I am justified, and cleared of a dishonorable imputation," replied the young noble, with a look of proud humility.

"We shall no longer be strangers, noble youth. Let me assume a mother's place in thy regard while thou art absent from the noble lady of Bretagne, who may well feel proud of her son. Abaris," said the lady, turning to speak to the bard. But he was gone; and, calling an attendant, she directed him to conduct the Count of Bretagne to the guest-chamber usually appropriated to royal visitors, and order refreshments.

At an early hour of the day, people began to throng up toward the hall of Tara. The minds of men were filled with vague apprehensions and expectations of some wonderful event, which for the time seemed to exclude all those sentiments of national pride which had heretofore governed them on these occasions. Murmurs and whispers ran from one to another, until the name of Patricius and the prophecy of the Arch-Druid were on every tongue.

At last a peal of martial music burst on the air, and the great portals of the hall of Tara were thrown open. To Clotaire of Bretagne, who had gone up in the suite of the King of Munster and obtained an advantageous position which commanded an uninterrupted view, the coup-d'æil was magnificent. The hall, five hundred feet long, was adorned with elegant pillars, which, like the walls, were incrusted with fine Italian marble. At the upper end was the throne, canopied over with rich silks heavily embroidered with gold, over which hung the shield and armorial quarterings of the monarch. This was surrounded by seats of honor, wrought of precious metals and ivory and decorated with jewels. The stalls or seats of the members of the Assembly were of highly-carved oak, and designated by the shields and insignia of the order of those to whom they were assigned.

The monarch has taken his seat; the princes of the Milesian blood-royal take their station near his person;

the four provincial kings surround him; the Druids and royal bards file slowly in, and seat themselves in their places near the throne; then follow the senators and commons of the Assembly, who fill the grand hall to its utmost limits, all seated according to their order and rank. On this day the riches and resources of the kingdom were well represented by the magnificence of the spectacle, and its strength exhibited by the loyalty and wisdom of men who wore on their countenances a grave forethought and determined patriotism. The splendor of the royal robes, the grave magnificence of the Druids, the light yet costly attire of the bards, and the rich robing of the nobles glittering with gold and sprinkled thick with gems, threw a glory over the pageant which dazzled and bewildered the eye. When all was arranged for the opening of the Assembly, the peal and clangor of music were succeeded by a grand flourish of trumpets, after which all was silent, -so silent that a deep breath would have rippled the stillness which pervaded that immense hall. The monarch Laogare arose, and, resting his hand on his jeweled scepter and throwing the other out with a graceful and impressive gesture, addressed the Estates of Tara:-

"Kings, princes, priests, bards, nobles, and chiefs! Before the regular business of the Assembly opens, we wish to give audience to one Patricius,—the same who dared to throw contempt on the Bealtic rites on the plains of Magh-Breagh. He is here, we learn, under the sacred character of ambassador, and belongs to an order of the Roman nobility which ranks next to the imperial dignity. This fact is signified by his name. We should receive him with all the honors due to his rank, had he not infringed our laws and seduced our subjects. As it is, to signify our grave displeasure toward this impudent innovator, we command all who are here present to re-

main seated when he enters.* Now, heralds, conduct Patricius before the Estates of Tara."

The eyes of Semo glared beneath his shaggy white brows, and the Druids turned fierce and vindictive glances toward the entrance, while the countenances of all expressed a profound and curious interest. Each one had formed his opinion of the aspect and bearing of Patricius; but none were prepared to see him enter unarmed, calm, and dignified in every gesture. Bare-headed, his noble and radiant countenance full of elevated and holy thought, his clear eyes truthful and beaming with the spirit of his mission, he walked slowly up the nave of the hall, and stood in serene majesty before the monarch and the Assembly.

"Noble stranger," exclaimed Erc the son of Dego, a chief of royal descent, while he sprang up from his seat, "such discourtesy were a disgrace to Erin. Sit thou here: I will stand, if needs be one must."

"The blessing of God and the stranger on thee, noble chief," replied Patricius, laying his hand on the head of Erc.

"Thou shalt answer for thy contumacy, thou degenerate son of a loyal sire," cried the monarch, in wrathful tones, to the noble and impulsive man, who stood with folded arms, unmoved and firm, by the side of Patricius, casting around him a defiant glance, which took in all, from the monarch on his throne to the lowest individual present. "And thou, enchanter! how is it thou darest to practice thy seductive arts in our very presence? Whence come ye, and why?"

"I come, O king," replied Patricius, in strong, clear tones, which rang distinctly throughout the extent of the

^{*} The words of Laogare.

hall and reached every ear,—"I come, O king, from my Lord the Pope, Celestine, Sovereign of Rome, who deigned to bestow on me, a poor man, surnamed Succath, and an humble priest, the puissant and noble order of the Patricii, that his messenger might do no dishonor, by the meanness of his rank, to the splendor of the court which receives him. But, laying aside all considerations of earthly grandeur, I announce myself a priest of the Most High God, whose sole object in coming hither is to unfold to this nation the mighty plan of salvation, to make known to them the value and true destiny of their immortal souls, and preach to all one Lord, one faith, and one baptism."

A confused and wrathful murmur followed the speech of Patricius, blended strangely with assurances of protection and expressions of admiration: then all was silent expectation once more.

"Unarmed and defenseless," continued Patricius, "I have come with no other protection than that strength with which the grandeur of my divine mission invests me. I have come to bring to ye glad tidings of great joy; to direct those who pour out their souls in senseless worship to vain idols, to a true and mighty God, the Creator and sovereign Lord of heaven and earth,—to unseal rich treasures of grace, even to those who defile the earth by their idolatrous ministrations, and make known to all the immeasurable love and mercy of a God who immolated Himself for the salvation of His creatures."

"Thou art a very Salmoneus, O Patricius,—a base pretender, whom Tienne will consign in wrath to the righteous judgments of Æacus, when thy mad fallacies shall be washed away like the sands of the sea by the test of a mightier power than thy ignorance and presumption dream of," said Semo, with a bitter and sneering laugh.

But Patricius, inspired by divine light, spoke with

holy eloquence to that royal, priestly, and noble throng. With such force and unction, with such clearness and perspicuity, he unfolded to them with such sublime simplicity the grandeur of the designs of God for man, he told the story of Bethlehem and Calvary with such pathetic force, that the boldest hearts quailed, the most superstitious felt an undefined terror and misgiving which made them tremble, while not a few sheltered themselves behind the pillars and covered their faces with their robes to conceal their emotion. The Druids gnashed their teeth and clinched their hands until the blood started beneath the nails, as the eloquence of divine truth rolled, like wrathful thunders, through the recesses of their souls. While Patricius discoursed on the sublime mystery of the Trinity, Semo, whose face was lurid with the wrath that raged within him, arose, and, with an air of triumph, exclaimed,-

"Thy story, O stranger, is full of wonders, which are strung together with rare and cunning power. The ignorant, who are not accustomed to the divination of mysteries, or well versed in that art which can detect a subtle error in pleasing novelties, might receive these dogmas which claim a divine superiority over those which we profess; but thou hast to do with men whose age and experience, whose wisdom and judgment, can discriminate between pretension and reality, -between falsity and truth. There is one point in thy vaunted doctrines so utterly absurd that the poorest hind in Erin would laugh it and thee to scorn,—a fallacy which will destroy the entire fabric of thy false system. I allude to this Trinity, concerning which thou hast poured out a flood of eloquent argument sufficient to drown us all-if it were not so utterly absurd. How can Three exist in one, and one in Three?"

Patricius paused. He lifted his eyes heavenward, then turned to his disciple, Benignus, who was with him, and whispered a few words in his ear. Benignus left the hall, unmolested, while Patricius stood silent and patient, awaiting his return. A smile of scorn passed from face to face. They thought that Semo had silenced Patricius. His downcast eyes and silence indicated defeat.

"He is preparing to escape," whispered one.

"He has sent the crazed son of Sesgnen for some potent charm to aid him," said another.

"We shall this day see the glory of TIENNE vindicated!"

"I thought he was no match for Semo. But see! his messenger returns: he presents something to him: it looks like a handful of leaves. Hark! Patricius speaks."

"To prove, O sage," began Patricius, holding up to the view of all a shamrock, whose three leaves spread out in vigorous beauty from its slender stem,—"to prove that I utter no absurdity, and the reality and possibility of the existence of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the unity of one Godhead, I have only shown you this humble plant on which ye have ofttimes trodden, to convince ye that the truth can be made manifest by the simplest symbol of illustration."*

So simple, yet so convincing, was this practical argument, that many who, having been almost persuaded, had yielded to the difficulties of the argument proposed by Semo, now declared themselves believers in the faith of Patricius.

Then arose a din and tumult. Like stormy surges dashing against a rock-bound shore, all words, all voices, combined to swell the discord and increase the tumult; and when Dubtach, the Arch-Poet of the monarch, left

^{*} The words of St. Patrick.

his seat and, pushing through the crowd, knelt at the feet of Patricius and asked for baptism, the Druids, covered with dread and confusion, clamored for his arrest, and prophesied ruin to the institutions of the land unless the Roman impostor suffered the extreme penalty of the law for sedition. But, lo! two of their order—two noble and virtuous men—two ollahms held in high repute in the temple and schools—rush forward and declare themselves disciples of Patricius; and now a youthful stranger, whose olive skin and black flashing eyes declare him to be a native of another land, whose noble bearing and manly beauty attract universal attention, throws himself before Patricius, asking to be initiated in the truths of salvation.

"Clotaire of Bretagne! thou art mad! Hence! hence!" shouted Semo, when he saw it. "Ha! what is this? Abaris! Abaris! Oh, my son! my son! Thou false, too, to the religion of thy fathers. O king, arrest this man, who is robbing thee of the gems of the chivalry and talent of Erin. I will myself slay him!" exclaimed the infuriate Druid, separating the crowd right and left with his arms, which beat wildly about him, to open the way to Patricius.

"Hold! hold!" said Laogare, springing before him and stretching his scepter over the head of Patricius, a sign of royal protection. "The hall of Temora shall be stained by no deed like this."

"Has the false tongue of the stranger beguiled thee also, O royal Laogare?" asked Semo, panting for breath, and pallid with impotent rage.

"It is better, O sage, to believe than perish,"* replied the monarch. Semo could bear no more, but, rushing out of the hall, he fled, as fast as his aged limbs would bear him, away to the innermost recesses of the temple.

^{*} The words of Laogare.

CHAPTER X.

DAIRENE.

THE purple shadows of twilight lingered like a solemn dream over the earth. Like a veiled and silent angel the evening star waited beside the portals of night. dews descended like heavenly gifts,-all unseen until leaf and flower were set with translucent gems, all unfelt until the lonely blossoms of the wild-wood, and tangled vines, creeping through mossy glens, lifted their heads in refreshment, as on its earth-mission the spirit of the night passed over them. The waves seemed hushed to rest, and swept against the rocks and through the abysses that lined the rugged shore, in soft and murmuring echoes. The marble temple of Nerf, on its wild and beautiful promontory, and the distant turrets of Innistore, where a beacon-light always burned from sunset to sunrise, over which fluttered the national ensign gleaming with green and gold, loomed up gray and indistinct through the gathering mist. Every sound except the voice of nature was hushed, while, clear and wild, the song of the nightingale rang through the solitude in sweet reverberations.

But now, along the margin of the woods, through the dim and shaded avenues which skirted the beach, white-veiled forms began to flit like wraiths, so fleet and noise-less was their motion; and anon low sweet symphonies swelled on the night-winds like spirit-music, so soft, so ethereal, so solemn were their tones. The vestals of Nerf

NAOM were keeping vigils in the sacred grove until the moon arose, when they would return to the temple to open the mystic rites in honor of her who was afterward worshiped in Greece and Carthage as Hecate.

Dairene, sad and drooping, wandered away from the rest, to watch alone for the first gleam of that golden disk over the distant hills, which formerly she was the first to greet with choral hymns. Along the cool and misty shore she wandered, until the sound of the waves brought to her heart low, sad, whispering thoughts of Mona. She had ever been grave and silent; but, since Mona had disappeared, she was never heard to speak, unless when her duties as guardian of the vestals compelled her to do so; and those who on rare occasions caught a glimpse of her face, which she kept constantly covered, declared that it was as the face of the dead. The younger vestals always hushed their laughter and ceased their jests when she came among them or passed through their midst. It was the only way in which they could show sympathy for so stern and silent a sorrow. Gradually she withdrew herself from all association with them, except in the solemn rites of the temple, where she was always the first and the last to come and to go. In her fastings and vigils, she seemed to forget that she was mortal; and it was no unusual thing for her to be found lying lifeless and cold on the marble pavement, where they had left her kneeling so rapt in the wild brooding of her anguish and the dark chimeras of her mistaken creed that they dared not call or touch her. She was conscious that she had become like a troubled phantom among her kind; and it gave her no slight pang to feel that, wherever she moved, the shadow of her woe fell over lives to which time would bring its own bitterness; but the feeling was buried deep down in her heart, and with few but gentle words she

ever evaded all intercourse with the inmates of the temple. Her favorite haunts were along the shore, and over the wild, precipitous ledges of rock that, barrier-like, lifted their sharp battlements over the sea. Twice, in the shadowy twilight,—far down on the beach, while with folded hands and downcast eyes she walked in deep musing,—she heard the sound of garments trailing past her; and once, at midnight, when the moon, gibbous and pale, looked down through racks of white cloud, she distinctly saw a form, flitting near her, so like Mona that she stretched out her arms to clasp it, and fell fainting on the shore.

Now, gliding along with rapid motion,—but not so rapid were her steps as the wild throbbing of her heart,—casting her eyes now toward the far-off hills, now out on the shadowy sea, now upward where the star-spirits were lighting the golden fires on the altars of heaven, she found herself far away, in a wild and lonely place among the rocks, through whose narrow fissures the waters hissed like serpents. She paused to rest, while Memory the mocker lifted the pall from the shrine in her soul where lay the image of Mona. It-touched the dead form, and it started into life and warmth and beauty. But what were such visions to her? She could not touch it; she could not fold it to her bosom as of yore; and, wringing her hands, she lifted up her voice, and, in her anguish, cried,—

"Could I only have pillowed thy head,—could I have kissed thy cold clay, while I decked it with flowers,—had I watched thy fleeting breath, and gathered into my soul thy last sigh, as it left thy bosom,—there would be some sweetness in the bitter draught. But to think of thee, sunlight of my life! torn by the jagged rocks, tossed and bruised by the cruel waves, thy joyous beauty dashed out forever, and that voice, which to me was sweeter than the

music of birds in spring——Alas! amid the roaring billow it shrieked for help unheard,—unpitied! Oh, Mona! why was it not I—I, the time-worn and time-weary Dairene—on whom this dark destiny fell?"

"Dairene," said a low, sweet voice near her; "Dairene."

Dairene turned quickly, and, tearing off her veil with wild emotion, beheld Mona standing calm and beautiful before her.

"And didst thou hear me in thy spirit-home, O loved and loving one? Has NERF NAOM taken pity on her old handmaid, and sent thee to comfort me?" said Dairene, with awe, while she folded her hands over her bosom and knelt on the sands at Mona's feet.

"Rise, Dairene. I am no phantom. I am Mona. I live," she said, tenderly.

"Thou livest? Then let me touch thee; then let me feel thee. There! put thy arms about my neck, and lay thy cheek to mine! O Nerf Naom! it is true! she lives! Mona lives! But, Mona, why this mystery?"

"I have come to tell thee; for I have watched thee these many days Thy anguish filled me with pity; and, moved by my old love for thee, and a feeling still more divine, I have periled my life on this moment. Oh, Dairene, there is a great and holy God, the Creator of heaven and earth, whose creatures we are,—who so loved us that He gave His only Son Jesus Christ to die for our ransom. He is the Deliverer of whom I dreamed, before whose power demons and idols fall, the Lord and Maker of TIENNE and NERF!" said Mona, speaking rapidly.

"But—but—Mona," gasped Dairene, confused, and half wild with horror, "come: let us return. Even now I see you hill-tops luminous with light. Hasten with me, songbird of my heart, lest we be too late for the midnight rites."

"I return no more, Dairene. I worship only the true and living God. Never more shall I bend the knee to idols, but, if needs be, will suffer death for Christ," said Mona, in her sweet, clear tones.

"Thou art-" began Dairene, with a shudder.

"A Christian? Yes," replied Mona, lifting her head from Dairene's shoulder, and unclasping her hand.

"Oh, hapless child of a faithless mother! Better had Semo struck the knife to thy heart years ago! Better had it been for thee hadst thou perished in the billows! for then thou wouldst not be so lost to me as thou art now! But thou shalt not escape. I will denounce thee, and, if need be, O sacrilegious one! mine shall be the hand to avenge the honor of NERF NAOM!"

She returned to grasp Mona's arm to drag her back to the temple; but she had vanished; she was gone; and, uttering a wild and despairing shriek, Dairene ran leaping along the shore, tossing her arms and tearing her gray hair, until, overcome by maddening agonies, she fell prostrate and senseless to the earth.

Mona had fled back to the cavern, where Lena, the fisherman's wife, awaited her return with anxious dread. She looked so pale, and there was such a glow in her large eyes, as she entered, that Lena sprang up, and, folding her brawny arm around the fragile one, led her, unresisting, to a seat on the rushes.

"I have seen Dairene. I have spoken with her, Lena," she said, in a low voice, while she panted like a hunted fawn.

"And how-what was her reception of thee?"

"Rapture,—joy,—until she learned that I was no longer a follower of NERF NAOM, but a follower of JESUS CHRIST. Then, in wild fury, she would have dragged me to the temple and placed me at the mercy of the Druids," she replied.

"It is true, then, that this is no longer a refuge for thee," said the good Lena, thoughtfully. "My husband has been here, gentle lady, and tells me that while he was fishing many miles up the Shannon yesterday, near the shore, he saw a large party, among whom were Semo and the other Druids from Lough Torc, riding slowly along toward Innistore. He has learned that there is to be a hue and cry after the Christians in these parts; and, now that Dairene has discovered that thou art living, it will increase the fury of the Druids, and their keen wits will not rest until thou art captured. But there is one thing,—one way of escape, gentle lady: only it seemeth like insolence to propose it to one of thy degree," said Lena, with respectful tenderness.

"Alas, Lena, why such language to one like me? Am I not too the servant of a crucified Lord? The more suffering, the more humiliation, the more pain I have, the more shall I be like unto Him who died for me. Oh, Lena, this morning, when, under the sacramental veil, the holy Finian bestowed HIM on me,—the sacred humanity, the immortal divinity, the mystical life of Jesus Christ, true, full, and entire,—my heart was so replenished and filled with such strength and love, that had I ten thousand lives I would offer them unreservedly to His glory," exclaimed Mona, with a radiant and sublime expression.

"But, my child," said Lena, humbly, while she gazed on the seraphic smile that lit up Mona's face, "simple obedience to the Divine will must be our guide. The holy Finian declares that it is our duty to avoid dangers; for by a needless exposure of ourselves to the rage of our enemies we should incur the guilt of presumption and lose the exceeding great reward of martyrdom. In the hour of peril let us fly to shelter in the holy name of God; then, when all fails, if it is the divine will that we seal our faith in the Word with our blood, let it flow, let it flow, O Jesus Christ, from our head, our hands, our side, for Thee, even as Thine flowed for us."

"Lead me whither thou wilt, Lena. Thou seest I am but a weak child," said Mona, kneeling down by the good woman's side and leaning her head on her bosom.

"Yes: Dairene, maddened by her love for thee, and her pagan zeal, will not rest until thou art immolated to her stern deities. Semo and the Druids will search the very depths of the sea, that they may sacrifice thee to their vengeance. There is no time to be lost. I have a sister at Innistore, who is the tiring-woman of the noble lady of the castle: she will receive thee as an assistant in the nursery in the place of the slave Panthea, who is crippled and helpless," said Lena.

"Innistore! I am known at Innistore, by some of its inmates, who have been accustomed to see me since I was a child, from time to time," said Mona, looking up with surprise.

"For all that I am prepared, gentle lady," said Lena, opening a bundle. "They will not know thee in the disguise I have prepared. Dairene herself would pass thee by unnoticed. So, let me fold thy long hair beneath this cap, let me sponge thy face with this dye,—thy neck, hands, and arms. Now put on this peasant attire. There! thou art safe."

"A servant!" murmured Mona,—"a servant! Is this glorifying God? Is this ignoble flight worthy of a Christian?"

"Dear lady, in holy obedience we imitate and glorify Jesus Christ, who became a servant, an outcast, and a reproach for our salvation," said Lena, quickly. "Yes: to become a servant for Christ is very sweet, Lena. To be subject to others, and feel no will of my own, is very sweet, because in place of my own will the adorable will of the Most High God will reign, filling me with newer and brighter life, until my soul is lost in heavenly communings which are types of eternal rest. I see it all, and feel it, now. Servitude or death, servitude or death, be mine, dear Lord, according to Thy good pleasure. Let us go now, that we may reach Innistore before day-dawn."

"His hand is leading thee, and His right hand is about thee!" said Lena, throwing a large gray mantle like her own over Mona's head and shoulders. Then they stepped out of the cavern, and wound their way cautiously down the steep and narrow path until they reached the level shore, when they walked on rapidly and in silence.

"I must go in here an instant," said Lena, pausing near her cabin, which lay in their way. "I have eggs and woolen hose to carry to Innistore, which I shall sell, to buy bread for my little ones; and I wish to let those within know our movements."

In a little while she came out, with two light willow baskets on her arms. The one containing eggs she gave to Mona, the other she carried herself.

"We will go on now," she said, cheeringly. "They are all well within. My husband and son would have risen to go with us; but I usually go alone, and I feared it might excite surprise to see me thus attended."

The moon was now shining in unclouded glory over their way, while the beacon-light at Innistore guided them on. It was a rough and rugged path: sometimes it led them over sharp, broken rocks, and sometimes through thickets of thorn-bushes and holly. The delicate vestal, nurtured like a song-bird,—whose life had been passed amid flowers and music and song,—felt footsore and weary, wandering at midnight in search of humiliations and bondage. Humiliations and bondage!
Was this all that the new faith had brought her? No, not
all. For that part of which the body is the prison—that
sentient and keen life, so deathless, of which the body is
only the earth-garb—was filled with a peace so tranquil,
a courage so high, a brightness of hope so heavenly, a
faith so strong, that it counted all things as loss for the
cross of Christ, and was borne up, as on eagle's pinions,
beyond the dull wailing of afflicted nature, so near the
confines of heaven that the bleeding feet were not thought
of, the weary limbs asked no repose, bondage was forgotten, and death itself was lost in the sweet fullness of hope.

"Lady, we are at the portals of Innistore: throw back thy veil a little way," said Lena, knocking at the wicket. "I am sorry to disturb thee, Dathy, at so early an hour," said Lena, when the porter opened it; "but I have come on a business-errand to my sister, and also to bring a small present to thyself."

"Good Lena, thou art ever welcome. Wait until I take down the bars. Thou must not be kept standing after so long a trudge," said Dathy, who disappeared; and, after a rattling of chains and the lumbering sounds of displaced bars, one side of the portal, iron-ribbed and grim, was thrown open, and the two women entered the lodge, where there was no want of substantial comfort.

"Say, good Lena, is this thy daughter? If she is, she looks more like an Egyptian than thou dost."

"No, Dathy: she is not my child, except by adoption. She is a poor orphan who has been confided to my care. Sit here, mavourneen, and rest a moment while I get out the hose which I knit for my friend Dathy—may they fit thee as well as the good wishes that made them!" said

Lena, turning out the contents of her basket, to direct the man's attention from Mona. "Aha! there they are,—the brightest scarlet and purest white in Munster. Our monarch himself does not wear a finer or softer fleece."

"My good and excellent Lena!" cried Dathy, in an ecstasy of delight, "who of the good people set thee on this? The very thing I wanted! Now, Dathy! do choroide gun roinn! in such hose thou wilt be invincible! We'll see if that jilting hussy Maia will turn up her pert nose at the wearer of scarlet and white. A thousand thanks, Lena! Here are wine and wheaten bread for thyself and daughter."

"I thank thee," said Lena, accepting the offered refreshment. "I have brought this young maiden to my sister, who wants an assistant in the nursery. I know that she is faithful and even-tempered, and thought none would better suit the place. But I must hurry back, to be in time to pack up our produce for the fair," said Lena, in her quiet way.

"True," said Dathy, surveying his large, well-turned limbs and the brilliant hose with equal complacency: "she sent word down last night that she expected thee. Even-tempered didst thou say is the Colleen dhu? It is well for her. I'd rather be pitched naked into a thorn-bush than have to serve under Aileen,—saving thy presence, Lena. I expect she's in a glorious snarl now! Old Panthea's been crippled these three weeks; and, in addition to the uproar caused by that,—for Aileen, never sick herself, thinks it is treason for any one to complain, however ill they may be,—we were all set wild last night by the arrival of a troop of guests, who brought such wonderful tidings from Tara that I have not slept a wink since letting them in. Hast heard aught extraordinary, good Lena?"

"Nothing," replied Lena.

"Well, I might as well be the first to tell thee; for it has brought great sorrow to Innistore, and a black woe to the house of Munster! Thou hast doubtless heard of certain wretches called Christians? Yes. Well, they are enchanters. I hear they can turn a lamb to a wolf, or a cuckoo to an eagle, by a look of their eye; and it is said there are many of them in these parts. Anyhow, one of them, named Patricius, was at Tara; and they say he stood on a hillock at Firta-Fir-Tiec, on the banks of the Boyne, the day the Baal-fire was kindled on the plains of Magh-Breagh, three miles off, and put it out by shutting his eyes and blowing his breath toward it. Only think! Then the people fled in confusion, pursued by a dragon, which devoured men, women, and children in their flight. The next day the infidel appeared before the Parliament of Tara, and under the very nose of the Druids enchanted the monarch Laogare, the Arch-Poet Dubtach, two Druids, a young noble from Gaul, and, worst of all, the pride of Munster, our bard, our prince, the beautiful and noble Abaris." Here Dathy wiped off a genuine tear, but continued:-"After which he chained them all, and changed them into beasts and birds, and carried them off in iron cages to a bleak island, called Lough Derg, where he has locked them up in a cavern of fire." *

"And they all became Christians?" asked Lena, scarcely able to keep down the exultation of her soul,—"all?"

"Every one. And they say that the Arch-Druid Semo has never spoken a word since, —that the curse of Patricius is upon him. Didst thou ever hear anything so ab-

^{*} Dathy no doubt alluded to the cave of Lough Depg, known as Patrick's Purgatory, where the apostle used to retire to pray and do penance.

surd as their belief? They declare that the King of the Jews—the Jews are a foreign and detestable race—is God, and He and they are trying to subvert our free and glorious land to his dominions! That is their religion. That is the reason they are threatening our free institutions with disaster and ruin."

"It is terrible, if true," said Lena, with a quiet smile.

"But, good Dathy, send some one with us now to the castle: the people are stirring, and it is past sunrise. I have to hasten back."

Lena was anxious to get back, to dispatch a messenger to the saintly Finian with the news she had heard, that he might be on his guard, and use more than usual caution in coming to and fro.

"True. I had forgotten. Come hither, Malchy," he cried to a man-at-arms who was washing his face at the court fountain. "Sit here, my friend, until I go with this dame and her daughter to the castle. Here is wine; there hangs a rasher. Make thyself at home: when I return, we will breakfast together."

The man-at-arms, nothing loath to the enjoyment of an easy chair and good fare, came with a broad grin on his coarse features in obedience to the summons, and, as he passed Mona, gave her a tap with his great hirsute hand on her cheek. Almost fainting with terror, she clung to Lena, nor lifted her veil again until they were seated in the apartment that served as a play-room for the noble children of Innistore, and over which Lena's sister, an ill-favored and ill-tempered person, presided, it being one of the nursery suite.

"Is she good-tempered? is she active? is she willing? can she sweep? can she sew? can she sing? can she hold a child? can she feed a baby? can she make gruel? can she scrub?" Mona heard her asking, with such

sharp volubility that it sounded like the patter of hailstones on a shield. "Speak up, and tell us what thou canst do."

"I know but little," said Mona, with humble courage; "but I will be obedient, and endeavor to perform well whatever tasks are assigned me."

"Ha! thou hast a voice like the cuckoo, and thy speech shows gentle breeding; but, mind, there are no little brownies here to wait on my lady," said the virago. "But I'll try thee; and I do think, if thy great wild eyes and yellow skin don't scare the baby into fits, we may do something with thee. So, Lena, thou canst leave her. I have my hands so full since that old wretch Panthea took to bed, that I get out of my senses a dozen times a day. I am tolerably patient, though, and will try to teach the girl something. But mind, young miss, no flaunting with the grooms and soldiers, and, above all, no words when I scold."

"Thou wilt find Coreen modest, sister. I only beg thou wilt let her have her sup up here, that she may not have to be among the men in the servants' hall. And another thing. Sometimes I shall come for her, to spend a night at home. Promise me that she shall go," said Lena, with tingling cheeks and a glance at Mona, who was standing near her, with folded hands and downcast eyes.

"The Banshees fly off with ye, for putting such notions into the girl's head—but, by our mother's milk, I suppose I must say yes, for thy sake, Lena,—that is, if thou dost not come for her too often to spend a night, and if she gets back by sunrise. As to her taking her sup here, she's welcome, as I like to go down sometimes myself. We're in a stew at Innistore, now I can tell thee; what with the witchcraft of the Christians, and the apostasy of the bard Abaris, the very winds blow us sorrow. That old

Roman slave, Panthea, pretends to be lame; my lady storms and threatens; the child's sick. Here—what's thy name?"

"Coreen," said Lena.

"Here, Coreen, lay off thy veil, and fly round and clear this room; the children are shrieking," cried the termagant, rushing into another room.

"Be patient; have good courage, my child," whispered Lena, when they were alone. "When the holy Finian returns, I will come for thee."

She kissed her hand, and Mona felt a tear drop on it. Lena went away; and Mona felt a chill and shudder pass over her.

"This is not death; there seems nothing great or heroic in it,—nothing worthy of offering to the Most High God," thought Mona. "But it is suffering; yes, it is suffering; and what matters it, sweet Lord, how we suffer, if we suffer for and with Thee? Here will I think of Thee in thy Passion, here will I learn the science of meekness and humility."

Her instinctive neatness and innate love of order gave success to her task, and when the virago Aileen came to inspect the room she did not beat her.

And now, in truth, commenced her soul's warfare. She was the servant of servants; but she thought of the Crucified, and was silent. She was pursued from morning until night by petty tyrannies, which would have maddened her had she not been a Christian; she was struck and buffeted by ill-governed children, jeered and scoffed at by underlings, exposed to fatigues and labor beyond her strength, without a kind word or a soft look to sweeten her toils; and sometimes—yes, sometimes she felt weak and wavering, and numbed by the torture, until she remembered Him on whose mangled shoulders the heavy Cross was laid. She was human; she felt now

her weakness, and would have sunk into a very abyss of despair, had not the thought of the great ransom that was paid for her on Calvary given her strength, hope, and courage.

And yet she was indispensable. Her sweet songs lulled the noisy children, and her winning voice lured them away from the indulgence of dangerous sports. She watched them while they slept, and met them with smiles when they awoke. Her cunning handiwork and skill in embroidery made her of priceless value to Aileen, who could now steal more rest. None asked a favor of her in vain, yet none returned to thank her or offered their assistance or good offices. She had but one friend among them all; and that was the poor slave Panthea. When she could be spared, she hied up to the little closet under the eaves, with warm broth or healing embrocations, rubbed the crippled, unsightly limbs, bathed her feet, and anointed them with unctuous oils, which Dairene had taught her how to prepare; and while the forlorn slave, grateful and relieved, leaned back on her pillow of straw, Mona told her, in low, sweet tones, of God, until it began to grow brighter in that darkened soul-until, freed from the fetters of its ignorance, at last it sighed after immortality through the Cross of Christ.

One evening Lena came for her, and together they sped away once more to the cavern on the shore. Once more Mona knelt in sacramental penance at the good Finian's feet, and once more did she receive, with a joy that angels can never know, the Lord in his sacred humanity and perfect Divinity, in her earthly tabernacle. And well was it for her that, in the depths of her humility, she had left no venial stains to cloud the luster of her soul, well for her that the heavenly feast so inebriated her with joy that earth's bitter trials were all unfelt,—well for her; for it was her Viaticum!

CHAPTER XI.

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PANTHEA THE SLAVE.

In a lofty turret-chamber, which was enriched by all that was rare and luxurious, near an open casement, which commanded an extensive and magnificent prospect, sat the proud Lady of Innistore. A quantity of splendid silk lay across her knees, and swept the floor on either side, in rich folds. It was a banneret, which she was embroidering with golden threads and pearls, in heraldic devices and quaint patterns. Her face was a type of fearlessness and truth. There was that in her full, flashing eyes which would repel with scorn a mean or oppressive act, yet which would imperatively demand submission and respect to her position and state. The nostrils of her straight and beautiful nose were thin, and dilated with every breath; while her full lips, curved to the most perfect line of beauty, wore a look of more hauteur than tenderness. Her raven hair was confined under a network of pearls, which was fringed with a glistening border of pear-pearls, that drooped over her broad white forehead and blue-veined temples like snow-flakes on a lotusleaf. A robe of lilac-colored silk, with flowing sleeves turned up with ermine and a girdle of twisted pearls, pullficeld brane of run completed her attire.

The wind swept up from the sea in sweet and murmuring cadences, ever and anon touching the strings of a harp which stood uncovered near the casement, and yielded wild and music-breathing strains to its spirit-like fingerings. The lady lifted her eyes from her broidery, and gazed out long and earnestly on the noble and sunlit view; then, with an impatient look and a quick sigh, she threw aside the banneret, and tossed the threads of gold and strings of pearls in a glittering heap down with it.

"Bright, splendid, unclouded," she exclaimed, "are yonder scenes; but, viewed through the medium of a vexed and troubled heart, they are wanting in glory. Why is it that there is ever a longing-a void-in the soul? Why is it that we are never filled with the joys around us? Why cannot we, like the birds of the air or the flowers of the meadow, who heed neither hunter's arrow nor midnight storm, after both are sped, revel and grow wild in the bliss of sunshine and flowers? Why doth sorrow, like a taskmaster, scourge us, as if we were slaves, away from all gladness? Why does disappointment embitter the very fountains of life? Is it because we are human, and that there is a something which we know not of, that would fill all the desires of an immortal nature? Is it because there is a balm, down-flowing to the earth, which our instincts long for, yet cannot find? O NERF NAOM, lead thy child! O NERF NAOM, teach me true wisdom!"

An attendant entered,—one of the esquires of the anteroom,—and ushered in Count Ulric of Heidelberg, who, bowing with courtly reverence, lifted the long white fingers of the lady to his lips.

"Be seated, Count Ulric," she said, disengaging her hand with a queenly air; for she had heard somewhat of his treachery toward his friend at Tara. "Methought thou hadst gone to the schools at Lough-Tore."

"No, my Lady Bernice. Some unexpected deliberations detain the Arch-Druid at yonder temple; and, weary of

its monotony, to avoid hanging myself, I galloped over to Innistore, in hopes to find thy lord in a humor for hawking this fine day; but they tell me that he has gone a journey."

"Yes; he has gone to seek an interview with our brother Abaris, who so unwarily fell into the magic nets of Patricius," she replied, while a red spot glowed on her forehead.

"Those events have indeed become portentous, in which the monarch, the teachers of the schools, and the bravest chiefs take the lead," said Count Ulric, with a sneer. "My creed is, to laugh at all doctrines and let them dance round their circle of folly unmolested, unless they interfere with me is some peculiar way. But what sayest thou, noble lady, to these strange doings?"

"Say, sir count? What can a weak woman say, when men forget their fidelity to all faith and honor? Had I been there, Patricius would have found one, at least, to defy and scorn his falsehoods," she said, while such a fierce light shot from her eyes that Ulric involuntarily lowered his, and thought it safer to change the subject.

"Hast thou heard the strange news from the temple?" he asked.

"No, sir count, I have heard nothing, since they returned from Tara. Methinks that were enough to last one a lifetime," she said, with a quiet but concentrated air of wrath.

"Not heard it yet, my Lady Bernice? Why, there has been the wildest excitement there I ever witnessed. It was caused by an event of the most unexpected and startling character. At first I felt, as in duty bound, highly wrought up; but, as success now seems uncertain, all zest is gone, and, as I told thee, noble lady, I galloped hither to seek diversion."

He did not understand the quivering of those thin nostrils and the gathering flush on those oval cheeks; he did not know that her lips had opened to call him "Fool," but sat all unconscious, until she burst out with, "On my honor as the wife of a noble prince, thou hast not been an inmate of the temple so long without learning something. Thy words are as mysterious as the revelations of an oracle."

"I will speak more plainly, lady," he said, bowing.
"Didst thou ever hear of Mona the vestal?"

"Mona, the Rose of the Temple?—She who was drowned in the sea?"

"The same. She was not drowned, as was supposed. Dairene, one of the older vestals, had seen and talked with her. She fled away from the temple, and sought refuge with some accursed Christians, who have converted her to their belief. Semo declares that the most awful penalties, the most horrid tortures, shall burn and rack her, when she is delivered into his hands. But no trace has been discovered as yet."

"Mona! Mona, the innocent and beautiful! Can it be so?" murmurred the lady.

"The Count Clotaire of Bretagne once saw Mona unveiled, and formed a wild and passionate love for her. He has also become a Christian, and it is expected that when one is found the other will not be far off. She, of course, will have to die; he will be sent back in disgrace to his father's court at Bretagne," said Count Ulric, twirling his small jeweled dagger around his fingers.

"This crowns their triumphs. Druids, monarchs, bards, chiefs, and now a vestal of Nerf Naom! Let the honor of the temple be vindicated! Let her perish, were she ten times more lovely, were she ten times more gentle and sweet-voiced!—let her perish, a warning and

spectacle to those who, like her, may be deluded!" exclaimed the Lady Bernice, with a dark flashing of the eye.

There was a quick sound of footsteps in the anteroom, a rustling of robes, and quick panting breath; then the drapery that covered the entrance was dashed aside, and Mona ran forward and knelt at the lady's feet, closely followed by Aileen, in such a tempest of fury that every limb quivered, and she could not speak.

"What means this intrusion? Aileen, how darest thou come thus into my presence? and who is this dark stranger?"

"Gracious lady, she is but a servant,—one whom I employed a few weeks ago. It is she who has led me hither,—she who, because I wished to chastise Panthea, the slave, for laziness, almost tore my eyes out. And when she saw that I would do it, she flew off, like a mad cat, to appeal to thee," exclaimed Aileen, stuttering and stammering.

"She did right, for aught I know, Aileen. But be silent. You have forced this quarrel into my presence, and I shall adjust it to suit myself. What wouldst thou, dark stranger?" said the Lady Bernice to Mona, who still knelt, with folded hands and downcast eyes, at her feet.

"Pardon me, lady, if I have presumed too far for one in my humble condition; but when Aileen would have stripped Panthea and laid the knotted scourge on the shoulders of one so ill and crippled as she is, I only besought her to spare Panthea and lay the stripes on me," said Mona, in low, trembling tones. "But she would not relent. Then I dared to appeal to thee,—not against Aileen, but to beseech thee, noble lady, to order that I may be scourged instead of Panthea."

"Is Panthea of thy kith and kin?" inquired the Lady

of Innistore, while a flood of strange and turbulent emotions swept through her mind.

"No, lady, she is a foreigner,—I am a native of Erin; but, oh, lady, her age, her sufferings, the slow approach of death to one so unfriended, has made her my sister,—my mother. I only beg for the stripes, that Panthea may be spared."

"So let it be," said the lady, after a pause of several minutes, during which she fixed her keen, flashing eyes on Mona's face, as if through its lineaments she would read the secrets of her inmost soul. "Aileen,—dost thou hear me?—spare Panthea. Let the scourge fall on the shoulders that are willing to bear it; and, remember, I shall require from thee a strict account of the old slave, whom I ever found faithful and true to my interests."

"Thanks, lady,—thanks!" whispered Mona, while her face grew radiant with the light within.

"Leave me," said the lady, more gently. "This is so noble and heroic, sir count, that, although my heart pleaded loudly for that dark and beautiful maiden, I could not deprive her of the glory of it."

"And yet," said Count Ulric, with a sneer, "I make no doubt, most noble lady, that thou hast frustrated some deep design. She counted largely on thy generosity, and would have sacrificed her heroism to her safety."

"Thou art a disbeliever, then, in exalted heroism of mind,—in the truth of heroic generosity! I pity thee, Count of Heidelberg," said the lady, with a smile of scorn.

"I have surely seen that face before," he replied, half musingly; for he deemed it wiser in him to avoid a discussion on the attributes of exalted natures. "It is like a half-forgotten dream. Those wild, beautiful eyes! that voice! Lady, if it were not for the Egyptian hue of that skin, I should say she was Mona the vestal."

"Thou hast an imagination which certainly suggests strange conjectures. Mona the vestal! I would warn thee, however, not to let thy wild suspicions subject the maiden to insult and exposure,—perhaps danger from the infuriate Druids. She is under the protection of the Lord of Innistore, who knows how to avenge an injury offered to the meanest of his vassals," exclaimed the Lady Bernice, while a red spot glowed on her cheeks, and her dilated nostrils and flashing eyes gave her visitor silent but eloquent warning to pursue the subject no further. So, making his adieus, he snatched up his plumed cap, and, with a lowly reverence, in which there was something of mockery, withdrew.

"My vengeance," he muttered, as he ran down the marble stairway,—"my vengeance is at hand, Sir Count of Bretagne. Thou didst rob me of a royal bride at Tara: I will in turn torture thee. Before day-dawn tomorrow thy vestal-love shall be in the hands of the Druids,—to suffer such pangs as shall tear thy heart asunder to hear of."

The imperious dame was once more alone. But a darker shadow rested on her queenly brow. Through her soul strange tumults were surging. Every nobler impulse of her nature, every generous chord of her woman's heart, paid homage to the heroic courage, the divine charity, of that delicate and fragile maiden who had forced her way into her presence to implore a boon! And such a boon! To be scourged! And for whom? For one who might reward her for the sacrifice? For one to whom she owed fealty and obedience? Was it for the mother from whose breast she drank the stream of life? It was for none of these, but for a poor, de-

spised slave,—a deformed and disgusting object, so very abject in her lowness that the meanest of her servants felt themselves degraded by handing her a cup of water! There was a motive under it all, which she, the noble and well-learned lady, could not comprehend. It could not be human affection. The mystery, whatever it was, might be good or bad. It should be tested. If bad, then the maiden deserved the scourge; if good, her sufferings should be amply rewarded by ease and affluence, to which she would elevate her; for then indeed—thought the Lady of Innistore—"shall I have found a being worthy of the love of a nature like mine."

Then she touched a small gold hand-bell, and two fair young maidens, her attendants, instantly came in from the anteroom, where they had been embroidering.

"Tell my esquire to saddle my hunting barb, and my falconer to bring out the hawks; then don thy riding-gear, to attend me in an hour's sport."

In a little while the gay cavalcade was coursing over the plains beyond Innistore. The fragrance of shamrocks and new hay, with the scents of the wild wood, floated on the calm air, through which the sun poured his glory like showers of gold over the earth and sea. A gray heron and white dove soon appeared, floating high up,soaring and bathing in the sunshine, as if their lives were lost in the quiet rapture of the upper air. But the hawks, fierce and keen, freed from jess and hood, espied their quarry, and sped like arrows up, far above them, then with one fell swoop rushed down, and struck their strong claws and iron beaks, with unerring and fatal aim, into some vital part of their terror-stricken victims. It was a brave sight; and the vassals of Innistore, pausing in their labors and dashing the moisture from their toil-stained brows, wondered if their proud and beautiful lady, who swept so brightly past on her coal-black horse, had ever heard of sorrow or sadness. But they little knew of the shadows that were coming and going like clouds or phantoms over that troubled heart: they saw only the light of the large black eyes, the flush on the beauteous cheeks, the perfect and noble form, the flashing jewels and waving plumes; and what wonder is it that they thought she was a stranger to the ills of human flesh? As the white dove fell fluttering and bleeding on her bosom, she thought of the dark maiden, the slave, and the scourge. It sickened her: and, throwing off the bird, and striking back her hawk, which was whirling and circling around her for the caress which he always received after he had struck down his quarry, she gave the signal to return.

That night, when everything was silent at Innistore, when the very watch-dogs had crept into their kennels for a moment's sleep, the Lady Bernice, pale and sleepless, arose from her couch, and, wrapping a dark woolen mantle around her, sought with noiseless and swift steps the apartments of her children. By the dim light of a shaded taper, she saw Aileen sleeping on pillows of snowy linen, stretched out, like a queen, on a soft and luxurious couch, over which hung a drapery of white and red striped linen. The hard features, the sharp, pert nose, the harsh mouth, were at rest; but her arms were out on the coverlet, and looked as if they were ready to recommence their unwearied, restless, and tyrannical routine at any moment. The children slumbered near her. The soft breath of innocence, the sweet flush of purity, made their sleep beautiful. The mother's heart was stirred by the sight to unwonted and sweet impulses, and, bending over, she dropped a kiss on their soft, roseate cheeks, then turned to find the one she sought. But she

was not there. There was a small, low couch, coarsely furnished, in a corner; but it was unoccupied. Thinking she might find the dark-eyed maiden, who had thus strangely stirred up the depths of her soul, in another apartment, she passed noislessly through the open door into the large play-room beyond. But all was dark and silent there, except just where the moonlight stole through the windows and lay in broken ripples on the floor. It was just light enough to see that there was no one sleeping there.

"For what am I seeking in the midnight? For whom?" she asked, suddenly pausing in the midst of the deserted room. Just then a moan, and the murmur of voices, arrested her attention, and, starting around, she saw in a distant recess a strong clear light shining through a crevice. She ran toward it. It was a door half open, through which she perceived a steep, narrow stairway leading up under the roof. From above the light gleamed down, and the moans and the murmuring descended with it. With a light, swift step she ran up, and found herself on the threshold of a small, cell-like room, and the witness of a sight which made the pulses of her proud heart stand still. On a heap of straw lay the slave Panthea, gasping, suffering, and weeping. Beside her knelt Mona, her dark hair flowing loosely around her, waving down to the very floor, except where, in moving her arm, it had parted over her right shoulder, leaving it uncovered. It was quite bare; and where it was not disfigured by red swollen welts and long purple stripes, it was as fair as drifted snow.

"Oh, dark-eyed one, this is indeed a new doctrine. Forgive! Forgive and bless such a one as Aileen, who deserves bitter curses. Oh! oh! I fear if it depends on that, I shall never be saved," cried Panthea, wringing her hands.

"Consider, my Panthea, the love of Jesus Christ, who, under the ban of ignominy, treated like a slave, scorned as a felon, crucified like a murderer, yet lifted His voice to His Father—God—and besought Him to forgive those who persecuted Him with cruel torments unto death. We must be like Jesus Christ," said Mona, gently.

"Dost thou forgive Aileen?" asked Panthea.

"Forgive Aileen, that she has caused me to do a little for Jesus Christ, who, without knowing it, led me along the sorrowful way with Him, and bound me to the pillar, where, with Him, I suffered stripes? Oh, Panthea, how can I thank her enough for it? When this life shall drop its clay, like a garment, into the dust,—when death shall lead the liberated spirit into the freedom and brightness of the children of God,—we will wonder how so brief and cowardly a warfare as ours has obtained for us such an exceeding great reward."

"Thou speakest of death as of something sweet and lovely. Wouldst thou be willing, child, to suffer death?" asked Panthea, with awe.

"What is Death? It is a transition. We only fall asleep, our suffering body wearied with griefs which have made our life a burden; we fall asleep cheered by the sweet hope of Jesus Christ, and when we awake—oh, Panthea, what glorious awakening into the dawn of a day which never ends,—in a land where no clouds, or dimness, or tears ever come, and, best of all, where hope is ripened into fruition, where there are no more fears, or despondencies, or uncertainty concerning our immortality, because it is won,—it is eternal,—God is there. The splendor of the Divine Trinity, the glory of the Virgin Mother, the prophets, the martyrs, with all the hosts of God, make it heaven. Death! sweet Death!" exclaimed Mona, clasping her hands.

"The Virgin Mother! Oh, she was human! She bore a threefold sorrow in her tender soul! I love her, Coreen; she will know how a poor wretch like me is unable to scale the steep way of heaven without great help. Yes, she will help me! She will ask her Divine Son to behold me, a poor, sorrowful woman, through her own anguish on Calvary," said Panthea, smiling and calm and hopeful.

"She is our mother, Panthea,—our true and loving mother! Her Divine Son refuses her naught. Their love is a mystery, which is inseparable one from the other; the love of Jesus and Mary is as much incarnate now as it was when it was announced to her at Nazareth that the 'Word would become flesh, and dwell within her.' She will aid thee, my Panthea; she will lead thee; she will bear thee along tenderly; for this loving mother is so tenacious of the glory of her Divine Son that she cannot endure the thought that His sufferings should become useless to the vilest sinner. Hence she is the friend and advocate of poor sinners," replied Mona, while the light of her eyes grew brighter, and the glow on her cheek heightened.

"But these wounds,—these stripes!" said Panthea, laying her talon-like fingers on the bruised and inflamed flesh of Mona.

"Forbear, and forgive me, Panthea, that I unwittingly have exposed them to thee. What are they? Nothing to mourn over," said Mona, quickly covering her shoulder.

The Lady of Innistore had listened to every word. Her soul was filled with wonder and awe. Could it be true? Yet, if false, who would endure sufferings and death for it? There was something so grand, so sublime, even in the smallest thing she had heard, that she felt her soul swelling and dilating within her to know more.

These new doctrines of a resurrection from the dead, and of eternal life, were ecstatic. She knew that they were Christians. In the excitement of the moment, her limbs trembled and almost refused to support her; and, fearing that she might fall, she descended with faltering footsteps the narrow stairway, and crept back to her own splendid apartments.

The next morning, Mona was summoned to her presence. The lady was alone, in a shaded and darkened room. Her black hair, unbound by net or cincture, fell like a veil around her. No pearls drooped over her pale cheeks to-day, no jewels glistened on her neck or arms, but, with a sad look tempering the haughty majesty of her brow, she reclined in an indolent posture on a couch.

"I am here, lady, at thy command," said Mona, who entered so softly that she did not lift her eyes.

"Ha! yes! I have summoned thee to my presence to question thee," said the lady, turning her penetrating glance, full of haughty will on the meek face of Mona.

"Thou hast a right, noble lady, to question me according to thy will."

"Tell me truly, dark and beautiful maiden, why thou didst offer thyself to be scourged for a poor deformed wretch like the slave Panthea, whose death would have been a release to herself and others. Some powerful motive must have ruled thee!"

"Noble lady, Panthea is old and crippled. I am young and strong—"

"Thou art deceiving me! Aileen is strong; I am strong; there are others still stronger than we: why did not we—why did not they—suffer for Panthea? Thou hadst no human motive. No mortal reason can explain thy actions," said the lady, rising on her elbow, that she might better see the face of her she was questioning.

"I pitied her, she was so friendless and desolate," said Mona, gently and humbly; "nor do I esteem it much that I have done for her."

"Thou art a Christian!" said the lady, sternly.

"I AM," replied Mona, with a flush of joy over her countenance.

"Thou art Mona!"

"I was Mona," she said, with a shudder.

"Thou hast borne scourging right bravely, O faithless vestal: how wilt thou bear death?"

"Death! For Christ!" she said, clasping her hands together on her bosom. "Oh, lady, can it be that I—I, a poor, weak maiden—will be found worthy of suffering death for Christ?"

There was a wild perturbation in the lady's soul. Here, under her roof, in her very presence,—noble, heroic beyond aught she had ever dreamed of, suffering scourges and glorying in death,—a Christian stood before her!

"And how wilt thou be rewarded by this Christ, after death?" she asked, in a low, choking voice.

"With immortality, O lady; with new and eternal life; with the glorious vision of God, which filleth those who are ransomed with exhaustless joy. Oh, Death! strong portal of Eternal rest! Oh, sweet Death!" exclaimed Mona, as if forgetful of the lady's presence.

"And how dost thou know this?" asked the Lady Bernice, in the same low tone.

"The great and infinite God—our Father—has himself revealed it, through His Divine Son. Oh, lady, believe! Turn thy soul away from the vain worship of false deities to the true and living God," exclaimed Mona, throwing herself at her feet.

"Maiden, thou hast proved thy faith by a heroism worthy of a better cause. I admit that there is some-

thing in it which is sublime and passes my comprehension. At some future time, as a curious study, I will investigate its philosophy. But thou art a Christian. One saw thee to-day, whose sharp eyes recognized thee under thy disguise. He is tarrying at the temple. Perchance thou dost deserve death for thine apostasy, and it may be difficult to protect thee, but I—yes, I will do my utmost to save thee, Mona. Remain thou here. I will speak with Aileen," said the lady, rising from her pillows and twisting her long tresses around a jeweled comb, which confined them to the back of her head.

Aileen was luxuriating in one of her usual fermentations. Her shrill voice rung out in commands and counter-orders, in threats and shrieks, varied by the sharp sound of a strap over the shoulders of some luckless domestic who crossed her path, or the crash of a tin flagon or a broom, which, falling short of its aim or going beyond the head at which it was thrown, fell clattering against the wall or lumbering along the floor. But the entrance of Lady Bernice calmed the storm in a moment. She was an unexpected and rare visitor in those regions where her foster mother had heretofore reigned supreme. Aileen stood aghast. She felt that her coming portended nothing good for her. The lady's stern brow and compressed lips convinced her that her star was no longer in the ascendant.

- "My gracious lady," said the subdued virago, "take this chair. If I had known thou were coming, things would have worn a different look, I trow."
- "I wish but few words with thee, Aileen," she said, standing cold and stern in her marvelous beauty, and waving back with her hand the proffered chair. "Thou mayest be faithful in thy professions,—nay, thou mayest feel for me a sort of love, even,—but thou hast committed

a fault which I would not brook from the mother who bore me, if she lived. Thou hast set thyself up as the awarder of punishments: according to thy will the scourge is to fly on whose shoulders and breast thou pleasest. From this day thy power ceases. Thou shalt have no one under thee; because thou art a tyrant. Thou shalt have no privileges or immunities beyond the other vassals of Innistore; and, if this does not suit thee, thou canst go away. Where is Panthea the slave?"

"Panthea?" gasped Aileen, pale and trembling, for she knew that inexorable will, or she would have raged and stormed and wept. "She is up there,—in a small room under the roof."

"Where no air or light can penetrate,—where her pain-racked limbs and feeble body waste on straw! Tigress, I could tear thee and beat thee, were it not—but I have learned a lesson. Go this moment with some of thy fellow-servants, and bring,—as tenderly as if it were I,—bring Panthea here. Lay her on that bed. First shake up the pillows and turn back the sheets. There! begone!"

"But the children, lady,—the children!" faltered Aileen, almost gasping for breath.

"Shall be removed forthwith to the chamber near my own, where I—I, remember—will superintend their well-being; for I trust thee no longer."

After they left the room, she walked to and fro, while her face glowed and her eyes flashed like the eyes of some fierce and beautiful beast of the desert. A new life was stirring within her; new light was dawning through faculties and attributes but half developed in her nature. She began to feel and understand the pleading of her soul for better and higher things than she had ever known. "A mean Christian shall not outdo me, a princess of royal birth, in generosity," she murmured.

Just then the door opened, and they brought in the sick slave and laid her on Aileen's bed. The lady herself arranged the pillows, and, sending for one of her own fine linen garments, put it on her with her own hand.

"Bring me wine," she said to her wonder-stricken servants. The wine was brought in a silver goblet, and she herself held it to Panthea's lips, who, swallowing a small portion, soon recovered her strength.

"Thou art better now, Panthea," she said, gently.

"May Jesus Christ be thy reward!" whispered the slave.

A deep flush reddened the lady's face, and tears flashed for an instant over the light of her eyes, as she whispered, "Be quiet."

"Aileen," she said, turning to her, "this is no longer thy place. Go into the western chamber, near my own, and make it ready for the little ones and thyself. Panthea, one will be with thee in a little while, who has been thy best friend. Hereafter, thou shalt want nothing."

Aileen, ashamed, enraged, and humbled, could only submit; but she vowed in her inmost heart that the brown girl, as she called Mona, and who she imagined was the cause of her disgrace, should suffer for it. Life without vengeance would be a burden, she thought, and from that hour, moody and silent, she brooded over plans of revenge. When Mona returned, all was changed. Panthea, breathless and grateful, recounted faithfully all that had occurred.

"See how soon Heaven flies to the succor of its poor children, my Panthea; and, as if to crown my joy, I see Lena, the holy woman, coming up from the park," said Mona, gently.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LOVER.

Panthea was asleep when the fisherman's wife came in. The fatigue she had undergone in being removed from her cell under the eaves, combined with the unwonted luxuries of a soft bed and fresh linen, had lulled her into a deep and quiet slumber.

"I am glad to see thee, good Lena," whispered Mona, leading her to a chair.

"I have come up from the shore in great haste to-day," said Lena, with a sorrowful countenance, while she lifted Mona's hand tenderly to her lips. "I have ill tidings for thee, lady. There is a report abroad that the Druids, having learned that thou art living and a Christian, have sworn to get possession of thee once more, that they may wreak a horrible vengeance for what they call thy apostasy. It is said that their spies are everywhere. I thought this was evil enough; but at the very portals of Innistore I heard from Dathy a tale which has curdled my blood. Is it true,—lady, is the thing I have heard this day true?"

"Dathy? Tale? How should I know, good Lena—I, who never leave these apartments?" said Mona, looking down.

"No need, gentle lady, no need to have left these apartments to hear it. Dathy says thou hast been scourged by Aileen—scourged on thy naked shoulders—

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for the guilt of another," said Lena, almost choked by the effort she made to keep back her tears.

"Trouble not thyself, my Lena, about idle tales. Thy information is not as correct as it might be. As to Aileen, —poor Aileen!—Is she not groping in darkness? How can she see the lures which the evil one spreads along her way? Let us not judge Aileen harshly," said Mona, in a low voice.

"Is it true, though, that thou wert scourged?" persisted Lena. "Tell me why, I beseech thee, sweet lady."

"Lena, if on some day in thy life-journey thou shouldst see our divine Lord Jesus, faltering along, lame, sick, sorrowful, mocked, threatened, and treated like a felon, would not thy soul burn within thee to help Him,—to aid Him? Would it not fill thee with joy if thou couldst say, 'Here, dearest Lord, let me take thy place: thou hast suffered enough; thou art fainting on the way: I am strong: let me lift that rugged burden from thy lacerated shoulders, let mine be the flesh that the scourge falls on'? And suppose he should say, 'Daughter, thy offer is precious and acceptable to me.' Consider, my Lena. What wouldst thou do?"

"Hast thou had a vision, then?" asked Lena, in a low and agitated voice.

"No! No vision! In yonder suffering one—in Panthea, who, guiltless of offense, and racked with pain, was sentenced to be scourged, I beheld renewed the Passion of Jesus Christ. In her I saw a wounded member of His thorn-crowned head, and, for the love of Him, in this the creature for whom He suffered, I endured the punishment. Aileen—poor Aileen!—was ministering to Him, although she knew it not. Let us find no offense in her," said Mona, humbly.

"May God the mighty Father pity her blindness!"

said Lena, weeping; "may her present humiliation prepare her soul to receive the light of Christ! But I must hasten away. I have other tidings to relate. Dathy says that yesterday a German noble who is tarrying at the temple, and who belongs to the schools, saw thee here, and asked him many strange questions concerning thee. He suspects thee to be other than thou seemest. He told Dathy that, if his suspicions were correct, Semo would raze the foundations of Innistore to search for thee. But, should danger approach, my son Dego, who is under-gardener here, and also a Christian, will convey thee by secret ways back to the cavern on the shore, in which there is a hidden chamber where the sacred vessels are kept. The good Finian himself showed Dego the way of access to it; and there, he says, thou must fly for shelter, and remain until the pursuit and persecution is over."

"Thanks, my Lena! May Heaven be thy eternal reward!" replied Mona, with the far-away look of one who saw beyond the limits of human vision. "But stay one moment, good Lena: I must tell thee one thing. The Lady Bernice knows my secret—"

"Ay," interrupted Lena; "but even she cannot protect thee from the Druids."

"No; but she can consent for one who understands the art of healing to come to Panthea. The holy Finian, I have heard, knows the secrets of herbs and medicines. Panthea is a Christian. Once, when she was in danger of death, I baptized her; but she has had no other help. Thou dost understand me?" said Mona.

"Yes. I will bear thy message, and send thee word by my son Now adieu, my sweet child," said Lena, embracing her tenderly; "adieu! should we never meet again, remember me and mine." "Thou meanest, if I should get home before thee," said Mona, with a bright smile. "Well, if I should, forget not, O Lena, that it may be some time ere I shall be in those unclouded realms where those who have 'washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb;' and those who have gone up through much tribulation, ever intercede for those who wait in hope. Let, then, thy petitions be earnest and unceasing for my release: then, Lena,—then, my sister, amid that glory ever new, the brightness and splendor whereof fill the inhabitants of that land of life with rapture inexpressible, I shall not forget thee. Farewell, my Lena," she said, kissing the brown cheek of the fisherman's wife. Then they parted.

More than once was Mona summoned to the presence of Bernice of Innistore, who, well versed in books and the subtleties of false doctrines, made use of eloquence, argument, and persuasions to shake her faith. But, like a rock, it stood strong and steadfast, the very waves that dashed against it recoiling back on themselves. Calm and gentle and humble, her constancy and faithfulness, the good and unanswerable reasons she gave for the hope she had, the proofs she brought, simple, clear, and strong, of the existence of an ETERNAL and ALMIGHTY GOD, not only startled the mind of the haughty woman, but when Mona, sitting at her feet, talked of Jesus Christ and the judgment to come, she trembled, and covered her face with her robe. But she still offered libations to Nerf Naom, and crowned her statue with cassia-leaves and roses; she still went to the temple to consult the Pythoness of the shrine of Nerf and throw spices into the sacred fires; she was still pagan,—as much so as a seed is a seed until its hidden life bursts forth in flower and fruit.

One night, when all were wrapped in deep and silent

repose, a sudden clangor burst on the air. The braying of trumpets, the shouts of the men-at-arms, the shrill outcry of the sentries on the walls, the howling of chained beagles, and the clank of bolts and chains as the portcullis at the entrance to the castle was slowly lifted, mingled together in one confused and terrific din. Mona started up. Her heart bounded and throbbed almost to bursting. The shadow and bitterness of doom fell darkly around her; the dread, and the weak whispering of nature appalled her. She thought that Semo and the Druids had come to tear her away to suffer in the darkness and mystery of the temple-dungeon, which she had heard was far down beneath the surface of the earth, having an outlet into the sea.

So thought the Lady of Innistore.

So thought Dego, the son of Lena.

"Thou must fly, Mona!—thou must fly this moment!" exclaimed the Lady Bernice, rushing in, with only her loose night-robes around her, while her countenance wore a look of wild affright. "Kneel not there so calm while the Druids enter Innistore."

There was a single tap on the door. Mona opened it, and found Dego there.

"Lady," he said, "come, thou hast time. I will bear thee to a place of safety."

"Fly, Mona!" exclaimed the Lady Bernice, snatching up a gray woolen mantle and throwing it over the vestal's shoulders. "Already I hear the tramping of their horses, the ringing of their armed heels on the flags of the court—but hark! hark! That cry! As I live, I believe it is my lord Eadhna! They come this way! Nerf Naom!" she cried, flying to a window that overlooked the broad court below, "what do I see? By the torch-light I behold Eadhna,—my lord,—and Abaris, his brother, who

holds aloft, instead of a banner, a cross,—who wears on his breast, instead of the harp, a cross,—the Christian symbol. And—and—oh, Nerf Naom! I see on Eadhna's bosom also a cross of gold! And there, near him, rides the young Gaulish count, who also wears this sign of sorrow and ignominy and shame. Oh, woe!—oh, evil day! why hast thou come to Innistore?" she cried, wringing her hands.

"What troubles thee, dear lady? Dost thou see aught like calamity drawing near to Innistore?" asked Mona, lifting her hand gently to her lips.

"He has returned a Christian!" she shrieked, throwing off Mona's hand,—"a Christian!" then fled back to her apartments.

Mona slept no more that night; with Panthea, who still trembled with alarm, she gave thanks to God that salvation had come to Innistore, and together they prayed that the Lady Bernice might taste of the waters of life as they flowed past.

It was even so. Like the Areopagite who sought Paul and returned believing in Christ, so the Lord Eadhna had gone to seek his bard brother in the camp of Patricius, to exhaust the eloquence of language,—to urge him by the hopes of his family, by the grief of his mother, the pride of his father, the credit of his house, to abjure these new errors, and once more, as one of the royal bards of Erin, take his place in the council of the nation and at the altar of the temple. Then, if all persuasion and argument should fail, he determined to slay him with his own hand at the very feet of Patricius. But he returned a Christian, accompanied by the bard Abaris and the Count of Bretagne, bringing with him a billet from the holy apostle Patricius to the Bishop Finian, beseeching him to go without delay to give baptism to the household of the Lord Eadhna of Innistore.

Christianity had developed in full splendor the spiritual and intellectual life of Abaris. Like a brilliant-plumaged bird whose wings, limp and powerless, had kept him from soaring up into the sunshine, whose notes, sweet but earth-born and earth-bound, had floated no higher than the cloud-drifts that bounded his vision, he now, healed and full of power, soared, as on eagle pinions, far into the sunbright regions of faith, where he sang of God and Christ in strains of such surpassing harmony that all who heard him paused to listen, entranced, first by the eloquence of his words, then by the promises of faith, which filled their souls, at last, with the treasures of the mystery of Divine Love, and a peace which breathed over them a foretaste of heaven. Like that fair and lovely gem of the Church, Francis Xavier, of a later age, Abaris had found at once the perfection and sanctification which so many toil after through penance and tears, yet so few attain; he had solved at once the difficult science which, even on earth, so elevates the spirit above the flesh that it has rapt visions of God. But Eadhna and Clotaire, more fettered by human ties and more filled with the thoughts and cares of life, followed at a slower pace,—humble neophytes, whose faith, though not less strong, was less developed by supernatural graces; who, while they adored in spirit and in truth the Divine attributes of the Triune God, felt determined, at whatever cost it might be, to fight the good fight and remain steadfast in Christ. The Lady Bernice stood truly between heaven and earth. The eloquence of Abaris melted her proud soul to tears; the persuasions of her husband shook her more than she would show; the gentle arguments of the young count filled her with admiration; while the example and prayers, the humility and sweetness, of Mona, and the patience of Panthea, convinced her

that their faith was something more than human, -nay, almost holy; but, when half persuaded to yield her proud nature to the yoke of Jesus Christ, her human friendships, the censure of the Druids, habits of superstition, veneration for fables, distrust, and the haughty love of power and regal splendor, dragged her back, and lifted high barriers between her heart and the inflowing of divine graces. She was soon the only one of the hundreds who filled the fortress of Innistore, who had not asked for baptism. Abaris was constantly out with the vassals, in the field, in their cabins, in their tents, in their barracks, teaching them day and night, forgetting food and rest in his zeal for their salvation, until old and young, the soldier and the serf, matrons and maids, the aged and little children, thirsted for the waters of life; and again he sought Patricius to beseech him to send a priest to them, for as yet they could find no trace of the Bishop Finian.

"It is strange," said Lord Eadhna, "passing strange, that we have no tidings of Finian. Hast thou ever heard of a Christian called Finian, Bernice?"

She paused,—opened her lips,—a deep flush dyed her cheeks; then she said, "I might deceive thee if I did not scorn a lie. I know not where this Finian is; but two of my household, who were Christians before ye arrived, may tell thee. I have heard the name pass between them"

- "Two Christians! And didst thou, sweet wife, protect them?" said Lord Eadhna, tenderly.
- "Their God protected them," said she, in a low voice, as she turned away to hide a starting tear.
- "Who are those Christians? Where are they, Bernice?" he asked.
- "One," she said, slowly, "is Panthea the slave; the other is Mona the vestal!"

"Mona the vestal!" cried he, with an expression of amazement on his face.

"Mona! Does Mona live?" exclaimed Clotaire of Bretagne, who was sitting in an embrasure of a deep window, reading. He threw down the roll of parchment, and, springing forward, knelt on a cushion at the feet of the Lady Bernice, half wild with emotion. "Does Mona live? or is it some other Mona?"

"First tell me, sir count, whence this strange interest in Mona? Where couldst thou have seen Mona? Answer me on thy honor as a knight and thy faith as a Christian. For I have heard strange rumors," she said, with proud reserve.

"Never but once, lady, did my eyes rest on Mona. I rescued her from a savage wolf, which had been driven, infuriate by the dogs, into the sacred grove. I, not knowing that its precincts were sacred, followed him with my spear, and came on him in time to save Mona, toward whom he was springing when my spear cleft his skull. She fell insensible, and for a few brief moments I held her on my bosom and gazed in her face——"

"I am a woman, sir count, and can understand the rest. Thou didst love her."

"Yes. I loved her as thou, lady, mightst love a white dove, or a lamb without blemish. But Lord Eadhna can tell thee how I was warned suddenly,—how in a brief moment I learned that, she being a vestal, my love was utterly hopeless. Then I heard that Mona had fallen into the sea, where I believed she slumbered, until these tidings greet me, that Mona lives and is a Christian! It is wondrous! it is too wild a thing to be true!" he said, striking his forehead.

"Thou hast never seen her, then, since the first time?" asked the lady, calmly.

"I have thought of her as dead! Seen her! No! In the wildest frenzy of hope, I never dreamed of Mona living," he replied.

"And now that she lives,—that ye are both Christians,—does thy faith forbid a renewal of thy love?"

"No, lady: our faith lays no ban on a love like mine. I would wed Mona."

"Then listen, and learn her history," said the Lady Bernice. And with flashing eyes, a grave brow, and proud but truthful air, she told them all she knew of Mona,—of her being scourged, of her sweetness and patience, and of the meek innocence of her life. Both of those brave and noble men dashed tears from their cheeks as she proceeded. Then she told, without a shade of boasting, how she, by her heroic virtue, had protected and saved her. "I have heard her speak," she continued, "of one Finian,—a holy man; and she may perchance give thee the information thou dost desire concerning him. But tell me, Eadhna, what need have we of Finian?"

"Noble wife, Finian is a Christian priest and bishop, one who baptizes and administers the divine sacraments of the Church to believers."

"But Abaris—our brother?"

"My brother is only a teacher: he is not yet a priest," he replied.

"And what dost thou want with this priest?" she insisted.

"To baptize my children, and those of my household who believe in Christ."

"My children!" she said, with a bewildered look. "Husband,—children,—household,—all Christians! But I will leave ye now, and this evening ye shall see Mona."

They left the room, and were soon out on the marble terraces of Innistore.

"Shall we fish, or ride? Dost thou prefer a gallop over the moors, or a sail on you bright blue river?" said Lord Eadhna to his guest.

"I love the wave,—the bounding motion, and the sound of the tide sweeping along," said the young count. "It pleases me sometimes to think that the same billow that bears me up flows on toward my native land,—that perchance my mother looks on it, or touches it with her beauteous fingers, as she wanders on the shore."

"Let us out on the waves, then. Here, Malcho! bring the tackle and nets down to the shore: we need not be idle, while the Shannon swarms with fish," said Lord Eadhna.

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CHAPTER XIII.

FOR CHRIST!

THE Lady Bernice sought Mona. She found her sitting beside Panthea, singing a sweet Christian lay, while her busy fingers plied the needle on some fine handicraft which required taste and patience. She arose, and, with love and gratitude expressed in every look and movement, she offered the lady a chair. She would have remained standing, but the lady drew a low, cushioned stool beside her, and told her to sit there.

"And how is Panthea to-day?" she inquired, kindly.

"Better, noble lady. May the great God reward thee for thy kindness to a poor slave!" replied Panthea.

"Thou art no longer a slave, Panthea: thou art from this moment free!"

"Free, lady! Alas! let me still be thy slave!"

"What! refuse freedom?" exclaimed the lady.

"Pardon, sweet lady, but my bonds are precious to me. Let me still wear them for the love of Jesus Christ. It is all I can do for Him, who has 'bought me with a price' that I might inherit eternal life."

"They give life, they give themselves to be scourged, they refuse *liberty*, the sweetest of all, for Christ," mused the lady. "But it matters little to me, Panthea. I wished to do thee a kindness; but, if thou dost prefer bonds to freedom, thou art still a slave."

"Thanks, lady," said Panthea bowing her head with a smile.

"I hoped to have pleased Panthea with my gift; but the news which I have for thee, Mona, will, I know, fill thee with joy," said the lady, fixing her full black eyes on Mona's face. "My lord has returned, a Christian; the bard Abaris, and a young noble from Gaul, are at Innistore, our guests, and both Christians. All of my household, except Aileen, are Christians also. I stand alone!"

"Salvation is nearer to thee than thou dost dream, O lady," said Mona, with sudden inspiration.

"When I see one die for Christ,—when I see Nerf Naom fall from the height of yonder temple when no storm rends the air or convulsion shakes the earth,—then, Mona, perhaps I may receive this new faith," she said, with a smile of scorn. "But it was not for this that I came. Dost thou know a Christain priest named Finian?"

"I do, lady," replied Mona, after a moment's hesitation.

"Nay! have no fears for him. My lord wishes a letter from Patricius conveyed to him. Dost thou know of a trusty messenger?"

"I know of one who would place it in his hands tomorrow at dawn," she replied.

" Who?"

"Myself," she answered, humbly.

"I will not permit it. The peril is too great. Some one else must be found to do it," said the Lady Bernice.

"I have to see the holy Finian on the morrow." Just then Aileen, who had lingered at the door, crept through the apartment, unseen by any except Panthea, on whom she threw a look of hatred and revenge. She had heard all she wished to hear. "Dost thou go alone?" asked the lady.

"No, lady. Dego, the son of Lena, who is under-gardener at Innistore, and is a Christain, will guide and protect me. He will not be home until night, as he has gone some miles up the shore to gather sea-weed for the soil. Hence the necessity that I should be the bearer of the letter from Patricius," said Mona, in her gentle way.

"And for what dost thou venture on so perilous a journey, Mona?"

"Dear lady," said Mona, in her sweet, humble tones, "the Christian priests offer to the great God an unbloody sacrifice, the fruits whereof are the real Presence—the body and blood, the divinity and humanity—of Jesus Christ. Under the forms of bread and wine, He, the Divine One, is as truly present as He was on the cross,—as He is in heaven at the right hand of the Father; and under these veils we unworthy mortals receive Him, our food and our guest."

"Receive a God!" exclaimed the lady, with a look of awe,—"a God! I will not believe it. It is profanity!"

"Not profanity, dear lady; for He Himself tells us, in the great Psalter of His word, that unless we eat of His body and drink of His blood we shall not enter eternal life. It is His own free gift to His children, whose sweet privilege it is to receive it," replied Mona.

"This is wonderful! But, Mona, these are delusions. Thou art deceived, poor maiden. But listen. One day a vestal of Nerf Naom was wandering through the sacred grove, when a wild and ferocious wolf sprang on her, and would have torn her piecemeal, but that a young, noble, and handsome knight came to the rescue, and dashed his spear through the skull of the savage beast. The knight saw the vestal, for the wind had blown back her veil; he saw her as she lay senseless on

his breast, where he had lifted her, and he loved her. Dost thou understand me, Mona?"

"I do, lady," she replied, raising her clear large eyes calmly to the lady's face.

"It is well. This knight is now a Christian. He is here; and when he heard that thou didst not perish in the sea, but wert living, and also a Christian, he unfolded his buried love and declared that he would wed thee! What sayest thou now, Mona? Thou wouldst be my equal,—a countess, a powerful and rich lady, and the beloved bride of a noble and generous knight."

"May the great and holy God reward him evermore for saving me from the fangs of the wolf! I remember the day well."

"But he loves thee, Mona! He—this Count of Bretagne—would wed thee!"

"Noble lady," she said, very gently, "I have naught to do with human love: I know it not. I would not wed the greatest monarch the earth knows, even if such a one deigned to seek my hand. I am pledged and plighted in a holy faith to a divine Spouse" And a smile, one of those rare and radiant smiles that sometimes flashed like light from heaven over her face, now lit her countenance.

"Thou art mad!" exclaimed the Lady Bernice, angrily.

"Not mad, most noble lady. I only mean that, instead of being a vestal of Nerf, who is a false Deity, I wish to be a vestal of Jesus Christ, who is the true and living God."

"Per Ethis! They count all things as nothing for this same God,—life, love, riches, rank, power, and liberty!" said the Lady Bernice, in a low voice. "It seems noble,—it is heroic, to say the least of it. But, Mona, it is my will for thee to appear this evening before my lord; he wishes to question thee. Therefore wash the dye from thy flesh, unfold those rich tresses, and at sunset come to my chamber, where I will see thee properly attired for the interview."

"Lady, might I be spared this?" said Mona, distressed and agitated.

"Spared! No! I will it!—I command it!" she said, as she rose, with an imperious air, to leave the room.

"Thou shalt be obeyed," said Mona, meekly; "and may He who has promised to be my help in times of temptation, aid me with strength!"

That evening the Lady Bernice stood waiting alone in her splendid chamber. It was hung round with ambercolored silk and Phænician mirrors. Luxurious couches, tables made of ivory and silver, filled with flacons of crystal and small golden vases containing cosmetics and perfumes, caskets of jewels, and other fine articles of adornment, stood against the walls. Large vases of flowers, an embroidery-frame, a song-bird warbling in a gold-wired cage near the window, would have told, in plain language, that this was the favorite retreat of some high-born dame, even had she not been there in her haughty beauty, engaged in the truly feminine task of examining a number of splendid dresses which were strewed over the couch before her. They were of the richest fabric and most costly finish. The last rich tints of sunset streamed through the western window, and fell with a deep glow around her, and brought out the glitter of many a gem in the robes and draperies she handled. Looking first at one, then at another, she laid them down with a dissatisfied air. At last, under a heap which she had not touched, she espied one made of white and silver. With a smile of satisfaction she hastily drew it out, and, selecting a veil to match it, she threw them over her arm, and went toward a mirror which overhung one of the costly tables we have described. The robe was fashioned of white silk, embroidered with foliage of silver and pearls; the veil was of transparent tissue, dotted with silver and bordered with a fringe of seed-pearls. "This will do," she said, well pleased. "This will just suit her strange and wondrous beauty. Aha! here she is now. Come in, Mona. See what I have selected for thy adornment. Does not this suit a vestal?" she said, laying her hand on the rich robe.

"Noble lady!" she said, shrinking back.

"Mona," was the imperious reply, while those large gleaming eyes were bent full on her, "I am one used to command,—and to obedience in those whom I command. Come hither, then, and let me deck thy matchless beauty as it deserves."

Without another word or gesture of repugnance, she approached, and yielded herself submissively to the lady's humor. It was a new form of suffering; and, breathing the name she loved so well, she stood silent and patient, -silent and patient, like a lamb which is garlanded with roses and spangled gauzes and gay ribbons, to become a victim in the shambles. So Mona stood while the proud dame of Innistore arrayed her in robes of purity and splendor. With her own hands she braided back the dark, flowing tresses, over which she threw the veil and clasped over it a band of pearls, fastened the jeweled clasps that secured the dress, then stood off to view the effect. Never had she seen anything half so fair; and, lifting her hands, she whispered, "Oh, Ethis! how more than beautiful!" With downcast eyes, Mona stood like a white-robed spirit watching over the dead, so pale, so motionless, so holy was her aspect,-her wondrous beauty half veiled, half disclosed, her hands folded

like two lilies on her bosom, and her eyes looking down, darkening her white cheeks with the shadow of their black fringes.

But her thoughts were not there,—no, not there.

"Come; my lord and his guest await us," said the Lady Bernice, sweeping along in her superb beauty, followed by Mona. They looked like the unclouded moon and the evening star. Mona's heart was troubled. She felt like a bird entangled in the fowler's snare. In her poverty and humble obscurity, she had experienced the sweetness and joy of suffering; her soul, undazzled by the glare of life, had bounded lightly forward, and each cheerful endurance had brought her nearer heaven; but now temptations, siren voices, the glitter and magnificence of riches, distracted the even tenor of her progress. Not that she yielded to them, or that she even feared them: they only for a fleeting moment diverted her mind from its calm and joyous contemplations; like a breath of wind they passed over her soul, rippling and agitating its pure depths, until the bright images reflected therein from heaven were hidden,—only hidden,—not erased. She would have yielded again with rapture to the scourge, but she would fain have been spared this.

Lord Eadhna and Count Clotaire were conversing together in low, earnest tones when the Lady Bernice and Mona came in. The last bright glare of day still lingered in the west; and in the uncertain and translucent shadow Mona looked like an ethereal being who had lost her way in the realms of space and paused a moment in this isleworld to rest. In graceful lines and rich folds the white gleaming draperies fell around her, giving out here and there a flash and glow as they caught the lingering daybeams.

"Welcome, child of God, our friend and sister," said Eadhna of Innistore, with gentle reverence. "Welcome, Mona," said the Count Clotaire, while his heart bounded and his cheeks glowed with the fair and chaste hopes her presence awakened. But a feeling which was impelled by some interior power, and which he could not define, held him back: he did not approach her.

"I owe thee many thanks, Lord of Innistore," she said, very gently, and with sweet gravity, "for the protection of thy house; and to thee, noble stranger, blessings and thanks, for the poor life thou didst so courageously save."

"Mere thanks, Mona, are a poor reward for such an act," whispered Bernice. "Thy words are as cold as marble."

"I fear thou hast forgotten me, Mona, in the terror of the incident; but I—thy image has never left me a moment since the hour it occurred," said Count Clotaire.

"Nay, gentle sir! I could"—began Mona; then she paused, lest some word might fall to wound. "A transitory glimpse could not insure remembrance! But my deliverer has not been forgotten. I have prayed for Heaven's most precious graces for him. If I seem ungrateful, pardon me; for I am not skilled in the language of the world."

"In the presence of these thy noble friends and mine, I beseech thee, Mona, tell me: could I not win thee to a warmer feeling than gratitude?" said the young count, earnestly.

"I grieve to pain thee," said Mona, whose face grew very white. "Heaven knows, if I dared, I would spare any word which might wound thee. But I am not my own! My feelings, my hopes, my loves, sir count, are no longer mine to give: they are pledged to ONE from whom I would not withdraw them to obtain the empire of worlds, of such priceless value is the reward I hope to win."

Count Clotaire bowed his face and covered it with his hands. Strong emotion shook his frame; they could hear his quick-heaving breath, and the sharp throbbing of his heart, all was so breathless and still.

"Mona," he said, at last, in low and tremulous tones,—
"Mona, when I thought thou wert slumbering beneath
the sea, thy image, like a veiled angel, led me to aspire
after the perfection of morality and a pure height of
philosophy. Now that thou art living, and, though lost
to my love, a Christian, a servant of Christ, even as I
wish to be, thou shalt help me heavenward. Thy words
have gone like a keen, sharp blade through my heart,
hewing asunder fibers and chords that bound me in sweet
memories and bright visions of hope to thee; but—but—
go: I would not rob Heaven of its vestal! My love for thee
was deep and strong; but from this moment I give thee
up,—my offering for the love of Christ," he continued, as
he approached her, and, bending on one knee, lifted her
hand reverently to his lips.

"May Christ be thy reward evermore!" she murmured, while a single tear rolled over her pale cheek.

"Per Nerf Naom! It is enough to drive one mad!" cried the Lady Bernice. "But hark, my lord! there is a great tumult below!"

Just then one of the esquires—now a Christian—rushed in, with terror depicted on his countenance, and, in hurried and confused words, informed the noble company that the Druids, with a large company of the officials of the temple and men-at-arms, were on their way up to the presence-chamber. With a single cry of alarm, the Lady Bernice threw her strong arm around Mona and bore her swiftly through a side entrance into a circular apartment, which was hung round with curious tapestry representing the ceremonies and processions of Nerf. Lifting this, she

pressed a spring in the oak paneling under it, which slid back, giving them ingress to a dark and narrow passage. She paused an instant to adjust and secure the spring, then, without speaking, ran swiftly along, winding and turning, until at last, out of breath, she paused, and whispered, "Thou art safe,—but this night, Mona, thou must away. Tarry here. After nightfall I will bring Dego, the fisherman's son; fly with him, and, if it be possible, seek the safety of Finian's cave until the pursuit is over." Then, folding Mona to her noble and generous heart, she returned, and, letting herself through the secret door with great caution, she went to confront and defy the Druids.

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CHAPTER XIV.

HEAVEN RECEIVES ITS VESTAL.

It was past midnight when the Lady Bernice returned with Dego.

"They are infuriated; they rave and threaten us all with dreadful vengeance," she whispered. "I defied them to the last; but now the party is dispersed. Those who remain at Innistore sleep; the Druids have returned to the temple; and this is the hour for thy escape. Thou hast been betrayed by a Saxon stranger, Mona—may curses light on him. But see: here are a flask of wine and some wheaten cakes. Gather up thy robe, it is thine, —my gift; fasten it under thy girdle. Now wrap this gray mantle, which I have brought, around thee. Ere long thou wilt see Finian: here is the letter from Patricius—curses on him! it is he alone who has brought such woe on me."

"I cannot even thank thee, lady: words fail; but there is ONE who is watching, and who will reward thee tenfold. I shall see the holy Bishop Finian. Once more, through all perils, I must see him, to partake, if God wills it, of that mystic feast, which giveth life to the soul. But for this, I would not fly!"

"Not fly! Nay, Mona, do not provoke me to spur thee on with the point of my dagger," exclaimed the lady. "I suppose this insane love for Christ would make thee willing to be slain by the Druids before my very eyes!" "My life is His! Eternal thanks! My life is His! He has given it; let Him recall it when it suits His holy will," she said, in her low, musical tones. "He calls for thee, lady. He, the Lord and Master of Life, awaits humbly at the door of thy heart. His divine head is wet with the dews of night, while He implores thee to receive salvation. He points to His wounded temples, His streaming forehead, His torn hands, His lacerated feet, He opens the purple wound in His side, to prove that the love which bore such torments to save thee will not rest, will not be satisfied, until thou art His; for, alas! He who with his breath can create worlds, cannot save the meanest of the creatures He has made, without their free consent."

"Silence, Mona!" cried Bernice of Innistore, in a voice of anguish. "I will hear no more. I would not be a Christian, to be the mistress of the universe. Begone! This passage will lead thee, Dego, through a subterranean way, far out beyond the walls of Innistore."

"Panthea, dear lady! Panthea!" whispered Mona.

"Panthea! I shall have her killed if thou dost not begone. Take this key, Dego, and on the morrow bring it to me," she said, half wild with excitement, as she turned suddenly, and, folding Mona to her breast, impressed a kiss on her forehead. "Never fear for Panthea," she whispered; and Mona felt two warm tears drop on her head. And they parted,—the lady to her silken pillows and sleepless couch, Mona to her midnight flight.

After walking an hour or two, they at length found the end of the subterranean passage. Dego adjusted the key to the lock, and it turned easily. In another moment they were out beneath the gray and silent heavens, in the solitude of the night, where only the rustling wind among the foliage of the forest, and the far-off moaning of the

sea, were heard. Pausing a moment to rest, and lift their hearts to God, they sped along toward the distant shore. There was a calm smile on Mona's cheek. Over her spirit, like the ebbing and flowing of prisoned tides, holy thoughts descended and ascended, until, in sweet and close communion with Heaven, she thought not of the perils of the way.

At last they reached the shore. The broad white sands and rugged cliffs were before them. The first gray light of dawn spread dimly over the scene. The morning star, like a patient saint, pale and obedient, awaited amid the shadows for the bright day-beam to kindle and then absorb its waning fires, in a greater and more perfect glow. The ocean tides were flowing in, rising, and moaning, and wailing, like TIME, inexorable and strong. Still lost to outward scenes, in blest anticipations, Mona neither saw nor heard the scenes around her, until a shrill cry and a heavy fall startled her away from the bright visions which Hope and Faith were weaving about her. She turned quickly, and saw Dego lying lifeless on the sands, where he had fallen, transfixed by a bearded arrow. She held his head; she felt his heart: all was stilled forever. Then she saw dark forms issuing from the woods, tossing their arms, and uttering wild cries, as they rushed down toward the shore. She saw Semo. She heard the frightful howl of the beagles as their keepers unleashed them. It was enough! Clasping her hands over her head, she sprang, like a hunted fawn, up over the slippery rocks, along the narrow ledges, over a steep and precipitous path overhanging the sea, until at last she gained the cavern. She entered its friendly arch, and was flying back into its deep recesses, when she discovered that it was not Finian's cave, but one which was connected with the mainland by a narrow ledge of

rocks, which, except during a very short interval when the tide was out, was covered with surf and foam. Already the billows were dashing their spray over the ledge, and Mona knew that ere long the roaring waves would climb higher and higher, until they reached and filled the cavern. Escape was impossible, death inevitable. In a moment she understood it all, and, folding her hands meekly together, she knelt, and in hope awaited her transition. She had not expected it so soon; but, now that it was so near, she felt that the promises of God Strength and hope brightened together were not vain. in her soul, and, looking beyond this mortal life, the thought of death's brief agony dismayed her not; neither was she afraid of the mystery of a new and unknown life, because her trust was in Him who is mighty and strong to deliver.

The Druids and their pagan followers found themselves baffled, but exulted that her doom was sealed. They knew the cave well. It had served their purposes more than once, when some dark deed was to be perpetrated at midnight, which they desired the sea to wash off from the earth. Slow and mighty flowed in the reverberating billows; but swiftly flew the news of the peril of the Christian maiden, and, by the time the sun arose like a golden flame amid the purple and gold of the orient, the shore, the cliffs, the heights around, were thronged with living beings. All the Christians who heard it hastened thither. The Lord of Innistore, the Count of Bretagne, with men and ropes, flew to the rescue; but a glance convinced them that no human arm could save her. The Lady Bernice, on her black barb, attended by her maidens, was also there, stern, pale, and full of an anguish which she had never known before. In unclouded splendor shone the sun on the strange scene. The sea-birds, with light gleaming

on their white wings, whirled and shrieked amid the tossing spray. The wind tossed the leaves of the trees with a joyous motion, and from the rolling lands above flowed down the mingled odors of newly-mown hay and the scent of wild flowers, while the summer birds warbled their clear, wild songs as they floated in the sunshine.

Presently a loud wail arose above the roar of the surges. It was the cry of a mother over the slain body of her first-born; it was Lena, the fisherman's wife, who, hearing of the peril of Mona, had rushed out from her cabin, without kirtle or hood, with her strong-limbed boys, to try and save her. But on her way she stumbled and nearly fell over the stark corpse of her son,—her Christian child!

"Is he thine?" asked the Lady Bernice of Lena.

"Mine? Mine?" she asked, roused by the question. "He belonged to God. He gave him. He has taken him. The mortal has put on immortality, and, through Jesus Christ, inherits eternal life. Thanks!—thanks! Then no more grief, no more tears, Lena, over this cast-off garb of clay; but, grateful that thy course is finished and the race won so early, my son, I will give thanks that thou hast passed to the regions of hope, to the Land of the living." Then, stooping over, she kissed the pale lips, and, covering the body with her mantle, she knelt to pray for his repose, and Mona's safe transit to the eternal rapture of the Beatific Vision!

"A mother!" murmured the lady,—"a mother rejoices that her child is with Christ! I can conceive that a mistaken heroism might suggest all else that I have seen; but this,—a mother's love offered up with joy to their Deity,—it surpasses all I have yet witnessed; for that love is stronger than death itself."

While this was passing, the wild billows were dashing

in with great velocity. The wind rode in on the waves with a thundering and bellowing that shook the earth with its reverberations. The water was now within a foot of the cavern, beneath whose arch the vestal of Christ knelt, while the sun, slanting into its depths, rested about her calm, pallid face, and white, glittering robes, like a glory. The wind had torn the fastenings from her hair, and it flowed back, with her veil, from her beauteous countenance, which already wore the ineffable repose of eternal peace; and she looked like an angel watcher amid the storms of life. As the billows rose nearer and nearer, her head in deep humility sank lower on her breast; and while her soul wrestled with its last foes,--the pleadings and throes of nature,—a torpor crept over her frame. Her passing away would be sudden and bright; the billows would engulf her for a moment, then bear her up, free and rejoicing, to that shore which is washed by the waters which flow from the Throne of the Lamb.

In vain Semo directed his archers to aim their swift, bearded arrows at her breast, as she knelt, a bright mark for their keen eyes; vainly flew the sharp flints from the slings of the soldiers; idly were sped the long, glittering spears from the stalwart arms of the men-at-arms. None reached her, but fell ringing against the rocks, and dropped without a sound into the boiling waves

Like a maniac, Dairene now ran shrieking and tearing her gray hair along the shore. The crowd made way for her; for she was a vestal of Nerf. Her wild shrill cries rose piping above the roar of the bursting billows, as, heedless of peril, she climbed, tearing out her nails against the sharp rocks, until she reached the highest ledge of rocks, and stood panting and sobbing over Finian's cave. The rocks which contained Finian's cave ran out parallel with the ledge on which Mona, in the terror of the

moment, had taken shelter, when, confused by the dim light and the pursuit of the Druids and their minions, she ran up in her vain endeavor to reach a place of safety. two caverns were nearly opposite to each other, and the two ledges, running out seaward, in the form of an angle, leaving a narrow strait for the sea to enter, commanded a full view of the shore. A man was seen to enter Finian's cave, and after a short interval reappear, and take his station on the rocks beside its entrance. Then, while all were gazing, the holy bishop in his sacerdotal robes came forth and stood in full view. He spoke to the man, Lena's husband, who uttered, between his hands, such a shrill, piercing shout that Mona heard it above the howling of the waves, and started up. The fluttering of Dairene's veil first arrested her attention; then, with a look of sudden hope, her glance was lowered, and she saw the aged priest of God, standing with outstretched arms, to give her the last absolution. She could not kneel; the waves had reached her waist; but she bowed her head once more, after making a gesture of joy by lifting up her hands toward heaven, with a smile of rapture.

Then she lifted her eyes up no more, until another shrill signal reached her. She understood it now; and, when she looked up, she saw the holy bishop standing, holding up high, in view of all, a crystal case, framed in gold, which contained a consecrated Host! Every Christian on the shore, inspired with courage by the sight, knelt, humbly adoring. The Druids, gnashing their teeth with rage, felt awed, and were silent. The very beagles ran whining and crouching about the feet of their keepers, as that Presence, which was lifted, a sign and promise to those who believed, flowed out in solemn and mighty influences over those whose souls still slept in the shadow

of death. Mona saw it. She stretched out her arms, while a glow like as of the brightest sunrise lit her face. Then they could see no more; for the spray covered her like a veil, and a huge billow sweeping in with a mad roar engulfed her. Those on the shore heard a wail and shriek, they saw the fluttering of white torn garments, they saw something plunge from the rocks down into the sea, and they knew that when the vestal of Christ yielded up her life to the relentless wave a vestal of Nerf Naom perished with her. It was over. The Druids and bards, with their vassals, were turning homeward. The people stood or knelt in groups on the shore. The Lord Eadhna and the Lady Bernice, with Count Clotaire, whose countenance wore the hue of death, stood together, awaiting the good Finian, to whom they had dispatched a message, beseeching him to come with them to Innistore. Lena and her sons were bearing away their dead, when, lo! a sound like thunder rolled out upon the calm morning air, a despairing wail went up from the Druids and their band, and Semo was seen to fall prostrate to the earth. turned toward the place whence the sound issued; and Bernice, who had seen one perish for Christ, now saw the great marble statue of Nerf Naom tottering on its high pinnacle on the summit of the temple, she beheld it topple and reel, then fall, crashing through the roof, and burying beneath its own fragments, and the ruins, the holy or inner shrine, and the statues of Nerf, Ethis, and Latona. With clasped hands she stood rigid and pale, gazing up into the empty air, where but a few moments before the statue of Nerf Naom had stood, an image of beautiful strength; then, with a deep sob, she flung herself on the earth, offering her life, her liberty, her state, her love, her children, her all to the true and living God. When the holy bishop, from whose eyes tears still flowed, reached

the spot, she ran, and, heedless of those who gazed on her, throwing off her pride and self-love, she knelt humbly at his feet, and, lifting the hem of his garment to her lips, implored baptism.

When the Druids lifted Semo from the earth, they discovered that he was dead; and five of their number, with three bards and one learned ollahm, returned, and, prostrating themselves at Finian's feet, sought to be initiated into the mysteries of the creed of the Christians.

As the throng gathered around the holy man to hear his words, Ulric the Saxon, with a fiendish smile, rode up, and whispered in the ear of the Count of Bretagne,—

"Did my eyes deceive me, or was that maiden who perished in reality Mona the vestal?"

"Ha, Ulric!" shouted Clotaire, directing his hand toward his dagger, "thou here? But no!—rest, if thou canst, in thy iniquity. Vengeance belongeth to God. She whom thou hast so basely betrayed—Mona, my first and last earthly love—is beyond thy malice now; and the thought that she is interceding for thee—ay, even for thee—stays my arm. Away, now, nor ever molest me again with thy presence."

"What lambs these Christians become!" exclaimed the Saxon, with a sneer; but he saw a kindling light in Clotaire's eye, a bracing up of the muscular form, and a quick upheaving of the chest, which warned him off in time; and, after a gesture of mock courtesy, he galloped away with speed toward the temple.

That night the noble young Christian wandered alone along the shore. It was cloudy and dark, and a deep calm had settled on the sea. He thought of Mona; he wished that the waves might wash her body to the shore; in the tumult of his grief, he wept and prayed by turns, until, thinking of her as one of the radiant virgins who,

clothed in raiment like the sun, surround the Throne, giving glory to Him who sits thereon, his sorrow was turned to joy, his weeping to gladness. Then, kneeling on the lonely shore, he vowed himself to the service of God, and offered up at the foot of the cross his nature, his humanity, his soul, his life,—a free offering, a holocaust, to Him who suffered thereon.

"Come hither, Christian stranger; behold a marvelous sight," said a man, who, wrapped in a dark mantle, had come near him, and stood unnoticed and unseen. "I am a Christian: therefore have no fear."

Clotaire of Bretagne followed him till they came to a place so closed in by rocks that one could scarcely enter the narrow opening leading to it. The tide was out, leaving a calm, deep pool, and they penetrated the gloomy recesses of the rocky path which surrounded it, the strange man leading, until a faint, luminous appearance in the distance guided their steps.

"There it is: let us approach it," he said.

They did so, and saw floating on the shallow water, as if in calm slumber, the body of Mona the vestal. Her robes were folded around her, and her hands crossed on her breast in sweet composure. A smile rested on her lips, and a look of unutterable calm on her brow. A fair luminous halo flickered around her head, revealing every lineament of her face. They lifted her gently: they dared not leave her there another hour, lest the waves should bear her out to the fathomless sea. Far up on the shore they hurried with the sacred remains; and while Clotaire watched beside them, filled with awe, and giving thanks to God, Lena's husband, the fisherman, went to Innistore to inform the good Finian of the event.

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In a few years, a large and splendid church was

erected near the palace of Innistore, beneath the altar of which, in a shrine of silver, Mona the vestal slept.

Aileen had betrayed her; but, repenting, she was converted to Christianity, and became the most humble and austere of that household, all of whom were so truly devoted to God. Panthea became her most tender care; and it was a touching sight to see her watching and serving one whom she had so persecuted. The bard Abaris, Clotaire of Bretagne, and a number of converted Druids and bards, retired to Innisfallen's Isle, in *Lough Tore*, where in cloistered aisles and solitary cells they sought perfection as the safe road to eternal joys.

Our task is done. Let those who doubt the narrative of Mona turn to the old archives of Erin, where they will read of greater wonders than any which we have related, not only of numberless saints, but of holy and wise kings, Christian sages, and heaven-inspired bards, whose memory and lives the Church cherishes like a sweet odor, who were, while living, her strength and succor, and who, amid the glories of the better land, are her fairest jewels.

THE END.

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